

With all this, in certain situations, such a tactic as a strike on airfields based on enemy aircraft may be necessary (or even the only possible one). It is not necessary to completely write it off from the arsenal of possible means of fighting for air superiority. The meaning and purpose of the strike on airfields can be described as briefly and simply as possible: the irretrievable loss of aircraft and pilots in exchange for gaining time. Airfields that have been hit and enemy air units based on them will quickly restore their combat capability, but there are situations in war when even winning a couple of days decides a lot. That is why **massive raids on enemy airfields were often carried out before the start of major offensive operations.** Even the most short-term decrease in the activity of enemy aviation achieved by this was a significant help to ground forces at the most difficult stage for them to break through the enemy defenses.

There were situations when attacks on airfields became the only possible means of reducing the activity of enemy aircraft. For example, at the beginning of 1941, both British and German bomber aviation switched to the tactics of night raids on enemy cities and military bases. Despite huge efforts (and considerable success) in the creation and development of radar detection equipment in combat units, night fighters turned out to be powerless at that time in the confrontation with bombers invisible in the darkness of the night. Nothing else but extremely ineffective and leading to huge losses of raids on enemy bomber base airfields was then practically impossible to undertake. What conclusions can be drawn from these general considerations in relation to the operation of the Soviet Air Force

scheduled for June 25, 1941? **The correspondence between the task and the method of achieving it raises great doubts.** There was

no need to use such a risky and costly tactic as a strike on enemy airfields. Not to mention the fact that the Finnish command did not plan to bomb Leningrad (and did not try to do this even when the front line passed at a distance

five minutes flight to Palace Square), in June of the 41st, the fighter aviation of the Northern Front and the Baltic Fleet Air Force had everything necessary to intercept and destroy two dozen Finnish bombers in the air. This assessment of the situation is in no way changed by the possible participation of one squadron of German bombers from KGr-806 in the allegedly planned "German command in Finland" raid on Leningrad.

But perhaps the Soviet command was misinformed? Perhaps, when deciding to strike at Finnish airfields, it proceeded from the erroneous idea that **large German aviation forces were concentrated on the airfields of southern Finland?** So large that seven hundred fighter pilots available (there were more than a thousand serviceable fighter aircraft in the Air Force of the Northern Front and the Red Banner Baltic Fleet) and the most powerful anti-aircraft artillery grouping of the 2nd Air Defense Corps could not repel a massive German air raid on Leningrad?

Maybe. Mistakes in such a complex and risky business as military intelligence are common. But in this case, assuming that many hundreds of German "Messerschmitts" and "Junkers" took refuge on the Finnish airfields, the Soviet command would have to prepare for an attack **on such airfields** in the most serious way. Prepare for a large-scale and heavy battle in the air, and not for the "lazy turns" of three SBs over the Finnish airfield. The main components of "serious preparation" for such an operation are well known.

Firstly, thorough reconnaissance, identification of the most significant objects for attack, identification of enemy fighter aircraft and anti-aircraft artillery groups.

Secondly, the allocation of such an outfit of forces that would make it possible to create an overwhelming superiority in the sky over the airfields chosen for the strike. *"It is impossible to be equally strong everywhere,"* paragraph 11 of the Field Regulations of the Red Army (PU-39) categorically states. And further: *"Victory is achieved by decisive superiority over the enemy in the main direction."* There was a real opportunity to create such superiority. The Soviet command had about 450 serviceable bombers at its disposal. This means that in order to hit each major

up to fifty bombers could be allocated to the airfield for enemy aviation.

Thirdly, the concentration of forces in space must be supplemented by concentration in time. Simply put, the main forces and resources should have been invested in a crushing first strike. The first, the most powerful and unexpected for the enemy. *"Suddenness has a stunning effect"* - this 16th paragraph of PU-39 every commander of the Red Army should have known for sure. The opportunity for a devastating surprise strike had been created. The government of the USSR did not break off diplomatic relations with Finland, did not present any ultimatums to it, did not announce the termination of the Moscow Peace Treaty, etc. Thus, all the necessary conditions for a sudden (or treacherous - speaking in the language of politics) attack were created .

Fourthly, *"the concentration of superior forces and means alone is not enough to achieve victory ... It is necessary to achieve interaction between the branches of the armed forces ... The interaction of the branches of the armed forces is the main condition for success in battle ..."* In this case, the fulfillment of this statutory requirement assumed organization closest for interaction bomber and fighter units and formations. All the necessary conditions for organizing such interaction were present. There were fighters - in numbers **twice the number of bombers**. There were external fuel tanks for I-16 fighters, developed and tested in the spring of 1939, put into mass production in the fall of 1939 and manufactured in the amount of several thousand pieces. With hanging tanks, the range of the I-16 type 24 increased to 670 km, which made it possible, operating from the Leningrad airfield hub, to escort bombers to the line Helsinki - Lahti - Mikkeli. There were airfields captured in the spring and summer of 1940 on the Karelian Isthmus, on the southern (Estonian) shore of the Gulf of Finland, on the Hanko Peninsula, taking off from which fighters could escort bombers without any external tanks. Finally, there were one and a half hundred of the latest MiG-3 fighters,

which not only surpassed the Finnish fighters in speed (by 150–200 km / h), but also had a flight range of at least 700 km.

Fifth, to strike at airfields, aviation ammunition should have been used, specially designed to hit area targets. Such ammunition was in service with the Soviet Air Force. These are rotary-scattering air bombs (RRAB), capable of scattering 116 small fragmentation bombs "AO-2.5" over an area of one hectare, and the so-called pouring devices, with which the enemy airfield could be poured abundantly with an incendiary mixture of KS or a suspension of white phosphorus. There were also quite simple ABK-500 underwing cassettes that could hold 108 ZAB-1 incendiary bombs or 67 AO-2.5 fragmentation bombs.

Military experts will undoubtedly be able to add to this list and the sixth, seventh, eighth points ...

On June 25, 1941, this is how everything was done. Only exactly the opposite.

Chapter 3.7

Wednesday 25 June

"Air forces of the front and armies with bomber units at 06:20 began to carry out the task of destroying enemy aircraft at its airfields" (278). This short phrase was located almost at the very end of the morning Operational Report No. 6 of the headquarters of the Northern Front of June 25, 1941. It remains to be assumed that the command of the Northern Front did not see anything extraordinary in this event. "Got to do it." It is noteworthy that the words "Finnish" or "German" were not used in the summary. Everything is clear to everyone and without additional explanations: "enemy aviation". The very fact of the bombing of the adjacent territory did not cause any comments from the compilers of the document. The most surprising thing is that there is NO mention of the Directive of the Civil Code of June 24th. Not a single word was said about the need to "prevent a German air raid on Leningrad." Evening Opersvodka No. 7 of the headquarters

of the Northern Front (20–00 25 June 1941) was more detailed:

"...Ninth. The air forces of the armies and the front carried out tasks to destroy enemy aircraft at its airfields. Bombing was carried out on airfields and airfield facilities. All known airfields in the southern part of Finland up to the Mikkeli-Turku parallel were subjected to bombing. (This line is parallel to the line of the Soviet-Finnish border, but not to geographical parallels. - M.S.) In most cases, successful hits in hangars, airfields were noted, and aircraft were bombed at some airfields. In air battles, 4 enemy aircraft were shot down, in addition, successful hits were noted on the Kauniainen airfield (Kauniainen, a western suburb of Helsinki. - M.S.) (15–17 aircraft) and the Joroinen airfield were bombed by up to 20 aircraft. Of our aircraft, they did not return to their bases on 11 Sat and no landing sites were established on 1 °C.

Air defense aviation continued to cover Leningrad. Meetings with there was no enemy, no losses.

Tenth. KBF continues to install barriers. The KBF Air Force bombed battleships and the Turku airfield, one enemy plane was shot down" (279). This

summary contains a lot of valuable information. Firstly, the message about a powerful strike, about "the first multi-day operation in the history of Soviet aviation" is **in ninth place in the general list of events of the day**. The command of the Northern Front still does not see anything in this air raid that would be of "decisive importance." We note right away that there were no other noticeable and significant events on the Northern Front that day at all. Paragraph one of Opersvodka No. 7 contains completely ordinary information: "*First. The troops of the Northern Front carry out defensive work in their areas by covering units, continuing to concentrate mobilized units to the border*" (280). Secondly, the word "German"

is not used in any case. The object of the strike was still called "enemy aviation" based on airfields in Finland, and the "national identity" of the enemy was not specifically indicated. This unknown "enemy" did not even try to strike back (in the sky over Leningrad "*there were no meetings with the enemy, no losses*").

Thirdly, it is already clear from this report that Soviet aviation suffered significant losses ("*did not return to their bases on 11 SB*"), and even at 8 o'clock in the evening the forced landing sites of another 10 bombers were not known. Consequently, venerable Soviet military historians in the ranks of generals either did not read the documents, or frankly lied, arguing that "*our aviation had no losses.*" The "creative method" by which Soviet historians counted 30 (or even 41) "*enemy aircraft destroyed on the ground*" also becomes clear. The compilers of Opersvodka No. 7 honestly admit that "*bombing was carried out on airfields and airfield structures*", that is, not aimed, "on areas", and only on "**some airfields** were aircraft bombed." Soviet historians summed up the planes **found** (but by no means destroyed!) At the Joroinen airfield (about how and with what results the raid on this

airfield, will be noted below) and Kauniainen (there was neither an airfield nor aircraft at all). and received the "desired number": $17 + 20 = 37$. Taking into account "4 enemy aircraft shot down in air battles", it turned out to

be 41. Fourth, judging by Operational Report No. the location of the Joroinen airfield can be called "central Finland"). Not a word was said about any strikes **against the location of German troops in northern Finland** . Only on June 27 in the morning Opersvodka No. 10 does the first mention of the actions of Soviet aviation appear in the polar sector of the vast Northern Front:

"1 SAD and aviation of the Northern Fleet on 25.6 made several sorties, but due to fog they did not reach the targets, for this reason 26.6. no sorties were made... 26.6. 7 Yu-87 planes bombed the Afrikanda airfield (near Murmansk. - M.S.), 17 hundred-kilogram bombs were dropped, there were no injuries, 1 junior specialist was killed " (281). The

strange "fog", despite which the German dive bombers raided the Afrikanda airfield on June 26, dissipates in Operational Report No. 11 (20:00 June 27). It turns out that Soviet aviation was also active on June 26. In Opersvodka No. 11, finally, a mention appears of the Luostari airfield, that is, the **only** Finnish airfield on which German fighters were based : *and Rovaniemi, fires have been observed"* (282). Of course,

there were also Operative reports No. 8 (7:00 on June 26) and No. 9 (20:00 on June 26). On the issue discussed in this chapter,

summary No. 8 said the following: *"... Sixth. The 2nd Air Defense Corps had no collisions with the enemy, the air defense aviation patrolled over Leningrad.*

Seventh. The Air Force of the Northern Front conducted reconnaissance of enemy airfields, had no collisions with him " (283). The content of Opersvodka No. 8 is even shorter: *"The Air Force did not conduct combat operations and reconnaissance flights"* (284).

In short, the “crushing blow”, “the first multi-day operation of the Soviet Air Force”, **was actually stopped on the second day**. At least, this is the conclusion that can be reached on the basis of documents from the front command. Operational report No. 11 (20:00 on June 27) already habitually states: “... *The*

seventh. The Air Force of the Northern Front carried out reconnaissance flights of airfields and concentrations of enemy troops with units and pairs of aircraft. Air defense aviation is patrolling over Leningrad...” (285)

Now let's “turn up the sharpness” and see how the events of June 25, 1941 unfolded directly in the bomber units of the aviation of the Northern Front (see Map No. 12). At 4 am

on June 25, Combat Order No. 3 was drawn up at the headquarters of 41 BAD (probably a typo came out with the order number, since Order No. 2 was signed late in the evening of the same day):

“1. According to reliable data, the enemy is preparing a strike on the city of Leningrad. The concentration of ground and air forces continues. According to intelligence data, the enemy air force is based at the airfields of Mikkeli, Heinola,

Mantyharyu, Valkeala. 2. 41st AD with successive strikes of small groups from 3 to 9 aircraft during 25.6. destroys the enemy materiel at the airfields of Mikkeli, Mantyharju, Heinola, Valkeala, making at least 4 hits on each airfield. Bombing altitude: 2000–3000 m” (286).

At the same

time, at 4 o'clock in the morning, an order of similar content was signed at the headquarters of the 2nd SAD:

“1. The enemy continues to concentrate ground and air forces, preparing an attack on Leningrad. Aircraft basing at the airfields of Luumyaki, Utti, Kouvola, Kotka, Borgo (Porvoo). 2. 2 SAD from the morning

of June 25 during the day, successive strikes by small groups of 3-5 aircraft destroy enemy aircraft at its airfields. The first blow to readiness. Tension - at least 4 strikes on each enemy airfield.

5. Bomb load: two aircraft [in the link] FAB-100 and one aircraft - ZAB-50 (50-kg incendiary bomb). Bombing altitude: 2500–3000 m” (287).

The obvious semantic and textual similarity of the two orders, signed at the same time in Gatchina and Staraya Russa, undoubtedly indicates that they were drawn up on the basis of one order of the higher command. It is extremely important to note the textual similarity of these orders with the Directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code (*"it has been established from reliable sources that the German troops are concentrating on the territory of Finland, with the goal of striking at Leningrad ..."*). As for the decision reflected in these orders, with such an organization of the operation, the fulfillment of the task set in the Directive of the Headquarters (*"to defeat enemy aircraft and eliminate airfields in the region of the southern coast of Finland"*) could no longer be remembered. The only question now was the price that would be paid for total failure.

Let's start with the fact that the deployment of Finnish aviation (there was no other *"in the area of the southern coast of Finland"*) was extremely inaccurate. Only in three points (Valkeala, Utti, Mikkeli) of the nine mentioned in the orders (Mikkeli, Heinola, Mantyharju, Valkeala, Luumyaki, Utti, Kouvola, Kotka, Porvoo) were Finnish fighters actually based: 8 Brewsters at the Valkeala airfield, 6 "Gladiators" at the Utti airfield, 7 "Fokkers" at the Mikkeli airfield. **Only 20 aircraft** (for the most part - the most obsolete) at least theoretically could have been bombed by two Soviet air divisions. The airfield hub near the city of Lahti, where 36 fighters were based, including three squadrons of the best LLv-24 fighter group in the Finnish Air Force, was not identified at all. Not a single word was said about the distant airfields (Naarajärvi and Joroinen), on which the most modern - by the standards of the Finnish Air Force - fighters were based.

Instead of a sudden crushing first strike, a light "pat" of the Finnish airfields was planned with *"small groups of 3-5 aircraft during the day."* It is clear that the first of the "small groups" could only alert the enemy and notify him of possible subsequent raids. Bombing from a height of 2-3 km and the use of a relatively small number (as a rule, six per aircraft) of high-explosive bombs reduced the probability of destroying enemy aircraft to almost zero. About Usage

the commanders of the district air force, bomber divisions and regiments did not think of cluster munitions. Finally, there was no interaction with fighter aircraft even in the plan (all the more it did not turn out to be in reality), and "small groups" of the "high-speed" SB bombers that had long since lost their status flew without any fighter cover to meet with Finnish airfields. The result was quite predictable.

41st bomber division. One regiment (205 BAP) did not take part in the air strike and did not carry out a single combat sortie on June 25. The remaining three regiments (10 BAP, 201 BAP, 202 BAP), which included, respectively, 38, 25 and 19 serviceable aircraft, *"from 7:45 to 15:00 on 25.6. groups of 6-9 aircraft operated to destroy materiel at enemy airfields"* (288). A total of 62 sorties were made (an average of 0.76 sorties per serviceable aircraft - and this does not include 205 BAP aircraft). Operational reports of the division headquarters (No. 1 of 14:00 and No. 2 of 19:00 on June 25) allow us to reconstruct the following picture of events: - **10 BAP.** Three squadrons of the regiment received the task of attacking the airfields of Mikkeli

and Mantyharju. A total of 32 sorties were flown. *"No materiel of enemy aircraft was found at the Mikkeli airfield. Bombs fell on the edge of the airfield ..."* The non-existent airfield Mantuharju tried to bomb two squadrons. Judging by Opersvodka No. 2, one squadron missed so that *"bombs fell with a flight over the Mantyharju railway station"*, the other squadron *"did not find aircraft materiel at the Mantyharju airfield."* Where and how this squadron got rid of the bombs is not indicated in the report. During the raid, one SB bomber was shot down by enemy fighters (according to Finnish data, Brewsters from LLv-24), another wrecked SB was able to reach Soviet territory and made an emergency landing.

- **201 BAP.** As can be seen from the operational reports of the division headquarters, the regiment commander nevertheless decided to violate the instructions of higher headquarters to deliver *"consecutive strikes with small*

groups", and in the first raid on the Heinola airfield (which did not exist in reality), two squadrons were sent, a total of 18 SB bombers. "The crews of the 201st BAP did not find the Heinola airfield (naturally, it was not there. - M.S.). The bombing was carried out from 08:40 to 08:43 on the alternate target - the railway station and warehouses. Dropped 108 "FAB-100" and 17 "FAB-50" ... At the target were attacked by enemy fighters in the amount of 9 aircraft, type Me-119 (so in the text, "Me-119". - M.S.). The latter had identification marks - red stars. The opening of fire was carried out at a distance of 50-70 meters. In the ensuing air battle, 2 Messerschmitts were shot down. 6 aircraft did not return to their base ... "

6 planes were shot down and crashed to the ground in Finnish territory. Among the dead were the squadron commanders of the 201st BAP Major (according to other sources, Lieutenant Colonel) Paniushik and Captain

Stoylik (145, p. 237). There is information that two tickets to the theater for the evening of June 25 were found in the documents of the deceased commander Paniushik (52, p. 249). If this is not a legend, but a real fact, then it quite eloquently testifies to the, to put it mildly, frivolous attitude towards the enemy and the beginning of the war, with which the operation on June 25, 1941 was

planned and carried out. Finnish historian K-F. Geust, in his article on the events of

June 25, writes: *"... The Finnish VNOS service on June 25 was completely disgraced. Although the fighter squadrons were based close to the bombed cities, they received no alarm. In a number of places, the alarm sounded when the bombers were already over the airfield..."* (145, p. 238) In the case of the

201 BAP raid on the city of Heinola, this impartial criticism is quite fair. Although the main forces of the LLv-24 fighter group were based at the Vesivehmaa airfield, i.e., about 20-25 km from the city of Heinola, not a single fighter was raised in time to intercept, and the alarm at the airfield was sounded only after Vesivehmaa saw clouds of smoke rising over the burning city (125 high-explosive bombs did their job). A group of 18 Soviet bombers was attacked by only **one duty pair** of Brewsters from the 2nd Squadron LLv-24, based

at the Valkeala airfield (northeast of Kouvola station). According to Finnish data, these two fighters (Sergeant E. Kinnunen and Junior Sergeant H. Lampi) shot down 4 bombers. Two more aircraft, according to H. Lampi's report, *"began to smoke"* after the attack (52, p. 247). It is possible that the 201 BAP bombers on their way back from the target were attacked by the main forces of LLv-24, whose pilots reported three enemy aircraft shot down by the end of the day.

The mention of "two enemy fighters shot down in air combat" is not without foundation, since both Brewsters returned to base with bullet holes after the battle with 18 bombers, and E. Kinnunen was slightly wounded in the arm. As for *the "Messerschmitts" -119 with red stars*, which in the amount of 9 units *"from a distance of 50-70 meters"* allegedly attacked a group of 201 BAP bombers, this riddle cannot be deciphered ... An aircraft with such a designation did not exist in nature; The Messerschmitt-109 had such a characteristic silhouette (narrow, long, pointed) that at a distance of 70 m it is absolutely impossible to confuse it with a fat, blunt-nosed Brewster (the slang name for this aircraft was "flying tank"). Finally, on Finnish planes, of course, not a red star was depicted, but a swastika, and very large in size ...

The first flight was the last for 201 BAP, and more in combat actions on June 25, 1941, this regiment did not take part.

- **202 BAP.** We note right away that the combat operations of this regiment were the most successful not only among the units of the 41st BAD, but also among all the bomber regiments of the Air Force of the Northern Front. 202 BAP bombed real airfields based on Finnish aviation (Valkeala and Utti), and given that German bombers from KGr-806 also used the Utti airfield during "shuttle raids" on the Kronstadt naval base, we can say that "German airfields in Finland". A total of 12 sorties were carried out. Airfields were bombed from a height of 3 km, while *"a flash was visible at the Valkeala airfield, followed by a fire."* One bomber from the 202 BAP was shot down by Finnish fighters. The bomber gunners allegedly shot down one Messerschmitt, and this time the 109th, but the Finnish

sources do not confirm any losses on the ground or in the air over Valkeala, Utti, Kouvola (289).

The overall results of the combat operations of 41 dietary supplements are presented in the following table:

	Испр. самол.	Вылеты	Задача	Фактически	Сбито	Повреждено
10 бап	38	32	аэр. Миккели и Мантюхарью	ж/д станции Миккели	1	1
201 бап	25	18	аэр.Хейнола	ж/д станция, г. Хейнола	6	
202 бап	19	12	аэр. Утти	аэр. Утти и Валкеала	1	
205 бап	13	0	—	—	—	—
всего	95	62			8	1

2nd mixed air division. This division, quantitatively and qualitatively better armed than 41 BAD, acted on June 25, 1941 extremely passively. The division's capabilities were already limited by the fact that the division's bomber regiments continued to be in the Staraya Russa area, that is, at a distance of about 350 km from the objects of attack. Taking into account the time required for climbing and the cruising speed of the SB (320 km / h), the flight to the target and back took at least 2.5 hours. The use of numerous airfields of the Leningrad junction and the Karelian Isthmus as advanced operational airfields was neither planned nor implemented in practice. However, given the length of daylight hours in June, two departures per serviceable aircraft per day - the first day of a "crushing strike on enemy airfields" - would be quite realistic.

In fact, the bombers of the 2nd SAD carried out on June 25 **less than one sortie for three serviceable aircraft.**

In the operational summary of the division headquarters No. 5 (19:00 June 25) we read:

"1. With successive strikes of 3-5 aircraft, the 2nd AD carried out sorties to destroy the enemy air force materiel at the airfields of Luumyaki, Utti, Kouvola, Kotka, Borgo. 41 s / v were produced ... " (290) In the archives of the 2nd SAD there are reports from the

commanders of each of the three bomber regiments of the division. This allows us to reconstruct the events of June 25 in sufficient detail: – **2 BAP.** In the period from 6:45 to 13:45, three units carried out 9

sorties to the Luumaki airfield (the Luumaki railway station exists, but there was no airfield there), 54 FAB-100 and 12 FAB-50 were dropped ". The reports honestly state that *"the materiel of the aircraft at the Luumaki airfield was not noticed."* The bombs were dropped on the "airfield" of a non-existent airfield. In the area of the Luumyaki railway station, bombers of the 2nd BAP were attacked by enemy fighters in the amount of 5 aircraft, which shot down one and damaged one SB. Most likely, these were fighters of the same 2nd Squadron LLv-24 based at the Valkeala airfield. At least two more downed Soviet bombers that day were credited to the above-mentioned Art. Sergeant E. Kinnunen (died on April 21, 1943, having more than 300 sorties and 22 enemy aircraft shot down) (52, pp. 249, 368). - **44 BAP.** In the period from 06:20 to 13:08, 18 sorties were carried out by four groups. During the flight to the target over the Gulf of Finland, two SBs collided in the air - one was broken and crashed into the sea, the second was damaged, but was able to reach the ground. It was probably in this collision that the squadron commander, Major

Kosyakin, died, since, judging by the operational reports, 44 BAP had no losses from enemy fighters and anti-aircraft artillery that day. The main bombing strike was carried out at the junction railway station of Kouvola. One flight (3 aircraft) was bombed at the Utti airfield, and from a safe (for both attackers and attacked) heights of 6.5 km. It was possible to hit the target from such a height only with

the use of televised guided glide bombs.

- **58 BAP.** Four groups of SB bombers carried out 15 sorties. The newest Pe-2 dive bombers of this regiment (as well as the Ar-2 dive bombers from the 2nd BAP) did not participate in the raids.

The object of the strike was to be the airfields of Borgo (Porvoo) and Kotka (port cities on the coast of the Gulf of Finland) that did not exist in reality. In fact, the results of the raids were as follows:

- 2 planes from a height of 6 km bombed the Porvoo railway station, because *"the airfield was not found."* The Porvoo airfield could not have been detected even from a lower altitude, since it simply did not exist. According to Finnish data, 6 bombs fell on the city of Porvoo, where several buildings burned down. The third plane of this link *"broke away from the group and dropped bombs independently on the settlement" (the*

name of the point is not indicated); - 5 SB from a height of 3 km bombed *the "settlement of Pyttie" (probably - Pyhtya, 15 km west of Kotka), because "Kotka's airfield was closed by heavy clouds."* Not having found the target, the bombers had to attack the alternate target (which was always indicated in the flight task). It was possible to simply drop bombs into the waters of the Gulf of Finland - but for some reason **the settlement** seemed to be

the preferred target; - the next group (4 SB) showed great perseverance and from a relatively low altitude (1400 m) bombed the Kotka airfield, but *"i.e. since no enemy planes were found at the airfield (in fact, there was no airfield), the bombing was carried out on the buildings of workshops or hangars. The results of the bombing were not observed and were not photographed, because after the drop [of the bombs]*

they immediately went into the clouds"; - at 13:20, the last raid of that day was made by a link (3 SB), which from a height of 3 km bombed *"on the port buildings, since the Kotka airfield was not detected" (291).*

There were no encounters with Finnish fighters and no aircraft losses in the 58th BAP. Probably, this can be explained by the fact that the primitive Finnish VNOS system simply did not have time to respond to

bombers appearing for a few minutes from the sea. The overall results of

the combat operations of the 2nd SAD are presented in the following table:

	Испр. сам.	Вылеты	Задача	Фактически	Сбито	Повреждено
2 бап	44	9	аэр. Луумяки	ж/д станция Луумяки	1	1
44 бап	46	18	аэр. Утти, ст. Коуволла	аэр. Утти (3 с/в) и ж/д стан. Коуволла	1 (столкн.)	1
58 бап	52	15	аэр. Порвоо и Котка	ж/д ст. Пор- воо, порт и г. Котка	0	0
всего	142	41			2	2

55th mixed **division.** the The only air bomber regiment of this division (72 BAP), based at the airfield of Petrozavodsk, was ordered to attack the airfields of Joensuu and Joroinen. If the large railway station of Joensuu as a primary target of a strike is constantly found in the pre-war operational plans of the Soviet command, then the Joroinen airfield is not mentioned either in the pre-war plan for covering the Leningrad Military District (although 14 airfields are named "by name" there), or in the Directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code of June 24, 1941 (*"eliminate airfields in the region of the southern coast of Finland, meaning the points of Turku, Malmi, Porvoo, Kotka, Holola, Tampere, in the areas bordering the Karelian Isthmus and in the region of Kemijärvi, Rovaniemi"*).

Most likely, Soviet intelligence did not reveal the fact that an entire fighter group of the Finnish Air Force (LLv26, 26 Fiat G50 fighters) was based at the Joroinen airfield. nowhere

also mentioned is the Naarajärvi airfield, located about 40 km northwest of the Joroinen airfield, on which the LLv28 group was based in full strength (27 French Moran MSy406 fighters). As a result, 72

BAPs had to attack the most "hornet's nest" of Finnish aviation without any fighter cover. There was no cover, although the Joroinen airfield and its environs, no doubt, were within the range of the latest MiG-3 fighters from the 7 IAP, 159 IAP and 153 IAP deployed in the north of the Karelian Isthmus. Bombers in the target area and I-153 fighters could well cover (there were more than a hundred of them in good condition in the 7 IAP and 153 IAP), the flight range of which exceeded 600 km. Taking into account the performance characteristics of Finnish fighters, the Chaika could still be considered a full-fledged fighter. But no interaction with the fighter regime

At 11:45 a large group (14 or 15, according to various sources) of SB bombers from the 72nd BAP at a relatively low altitude (1000 m according to Finnish data) approached the Joroinen airfield. The tactically competent actions of the regiment's command, it would seem, were supplemented by an element of luck - the bombers approached the airfield at the very moment when the 2nd squadron LLv-26, after a long patrol in the air with empty tanks, landed on the Joroinen airfield. In parentheses, we note that it is precisely this situation (an enemy raid on the airfield during refueling of aircraft) that is often used in Russian historiography to explain the reasons for the colossal losses of the Soviet Air Force: the Germans allegedly always arrived "at the wrong time ..." The strike group 72 BAP flew in to bomb the Joroinen airfield too quite "at the wrong time" (from the point of view of the Finns). Yes, that's just the

reaction of the Finnish fighter pilots was timely, clear and bold. Two Fiats immediately took to the air and attacked the vastly outnumbered enemy. As a result (according to Finnish data), three bombers were shot down directly in the area of the airfield, and the rest, randomly dropping bombs, turned back. A few minutes later, the 3rd Squadron LLv-26, called by radio, inter

bombers of the 72nd BAP near the village of Kerisalo (12 km southeast of Yoroinen). In the ensuing air battle, the strike group 72 BAP was finally defeated. Judging by the report of the commander of the Finnish squadron, Lieutenant U. Nieminen, only four SBs survived by the end of the battle, *“one of which trailed a smoky plume”* (52, p. 249). In fact, Finnish fighters shot down not 10 (as they stated), but 9 bombers of 72 BAPs. The tenth SB was already shot down over Soviet territory by a Soviet fighter. Among the dead was the squadron commander of the 72nd BAP Captain Polyakov. The Finnish fighter group LLv-26 did not lose **a single aircraft** that day either in the air or on the ground (although the report of the command of the 72nd BAP contained the already traditional message about “three Messerschmitts shot down during air combat”) (52, p. 249).

Probably the last loss of the day was another 72 BAP bomber shot down over Joensuu by an LLv-28 patrol Moran at 1300 Finnish time.

Let us now sum up the first results. The bomber units of the Air Force of the Northern Front, which were armed with at least 280 serviceable aircraft (and more than 400 combat-ready crews), on June 25, 1941, carried out about **130 sorties** against targets in Finland. Including the airfields where the Finnish fighters were actually based, **no more than 30 aircraft** were bombed (15 at the Utti and Valkeala airfields, 15 at the Joroinen airfield). At the same time, **not a single enemy aircraft was destroyed** or at least seriously damaged on the ground or in the air. Not **a single sortie** was made at the base airfields of the Finnish bomber groups (Siikakangas and Luonetjärvi) and the German long-range reconnaissance unit (Luonetjärvi) .

19 bombers (10 in 72 BAP, 8 in 41 BAD, 1 in 2 SAD) were shot down by Finnish fighters. One SB from the 72nd BAP was shot down by Soviet fighters, one SB in the 44th BAP was lost in a collision of two aircraft. Total **irretrievable losses amounted to 21 aircraft**, which is 16% of the total number of sorties. This is a very high loss rate. For comparison, we note that, for example, during the war in Spain, the average losses of SB bombers amounted to 2% of the number of sorties; losses

Luftwaffe bombers during the most critical phase of the Battle of Britain (July-September 1940) accounted for about 5% of the total number of daily sorties (48, pp. 77, 80). On the second day

of the "multi-day operation of the Soviet Air Force", the activity of the combat operations of the Air Force of the Northern Front dropped to

almost zero. Operational report No. 3 of the headquarters of 41 BAD of 19:00 on June 26 reports the following: *"In the period from 1:30 to 4:00 on 26.6. 202 BAP carried out reconnaissance and passing bombing of military targets with two links ... Other parts of the division did not carry out combat sorties "* (292). It is worth paying attention to the time of the "reconnaissance

flights". In June in Leningrad, the nights are, of course, "white", but not so to carry out aerial reconnaissance after midnight ...

Operational report No. 4 (1:00 June 27) is even shorter: *"41st AD 26.6. did not carry out hostilities"* (293). On

June 27, 1941 at 8:00 at the headquarters of the 41st BAD, Combat Order No. 4 was signed (the first after June 25). It set the following tasks: "1.

The enemy is concentrating troops near the border of the Northern Front... 2.

41 dietary supplements during the day 27.6. conducts reconnaissance and photography, along the way - bombing, of the following areas (the following is a list of 19 Finnish toponyms - M.S.) in order to establish the available forces and grouping of enemy troops, to establish a system of defensive line (emphasized by me. - M.S.) of the enemy . 3. Do not

carry out tasks without escort of fighters ... " (294) So, already on the

morning of June 27, the "airfield" operation for 41 BADs ended. The tasks set by Order No. 4 are directly related to **the upcoming combat operations of the ground forces**. It is worth recalling that the 41st BAD was operationally subordinate to the command of the 23rd Army deployed in the north of the Karelian Isthmus. It is noteworthy that on the morning of June 27, 1941, the purpose of reconnaissance was to identify the "system of the enemy's defensive zone." Nothing but preparation for

offensive (those who wish can call it a "counterattack"), the formulation of such tasks cannot be explained.

A new attempt to resume sorties, this time with fighter cover, led on June 27 to new losses. True, the enemy took a minimal part in this. In Operational Report No. 5 of the Headquarters of 41 BAD (15:00 on June 27) we read:

"The 41st AD during the day produced 11 s / in order to reconnoiter the enemy grouping ... 10 BAPs and 205 BAPs did not conduct combat operations ... In the Kexholm region (i.e., over Soviet territory. - M.S.) one The SB from the 201 BAP was shot down either by our anti-aircraft artillery or escort fighters ... In the 202 BAP, the SB link was attacked by a MiG. One SB was burned and broken, another one was shot down (the crew jumped out on parachutes), the third SB was damaged and landed

on an emergency " (295). Operative reports No. 6 and No. 7 (dated 20:00 27.6. and 15:00 28.6) again succinctly state: *"41st AD did not carry out*

hostilities ..." (296) A similar picture emerges from Operational reports Nos. 6, 7 , 8, 9 headquarters 2 SAD. There were no sorties at all on July 26, on June 27 one link (3 aircraft) from the 44 BAP flew for aerial reconnaissance in the area of Dvinsk (Daugavpils). This day, June 27, 1941, turned out to be a day of increased activity of Soviet fighters. In Opersvodka No. 9 we read: *"159 IAPs were attacked by MiGs, one was shot down"* (297). Who exactly was "hit" (bomber or attacking fighter); what happened to the aircraft and crew; finally, how a fighter from the 159th IAP based on the Karelian Isthmus ended up in the way of bombers flying from the Staraya Russa region to Daugavpils cannot be established on the basis of this report ...

Significantly more active, efficient and assertive the Air Force of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet operated.

Only these actions, even formally, had nothing to do with the "destruction of German aircraft at Finnish airfields". The Baltic Fleet Air Force unleashed quite powerful and organized strikes for a long time (since the time of the "winter war") and in detail

studied targets: naval bases and enemy ships, ports of Turku, Salo, Helsinki, Kotka.

Apparently, the city and port of Turku, which was bombed by air squadrons of all three bomber regiments of the fleet aviation, apparently enjoyed special "attention" from the command of the KBF Air Force. Starting from 7 am on June 25, large groups of Soviet bombers (a total of 54 SB and 30 DB-3) attacked the port facilities of Turku, against ships in the harbor (of course, the two Finnish coastal defense battleships were still the highest priority target " Vänemäinen and Ilmarinen, which once again survived the air raid). During the raid on Turku, Soviet bombers covered two squadrons of fighters from the 13th IAP of the KBF Air Force, based at the Hanko airfield (i.e., about 80 km from Turku). The Turku airfield located near the port was also bombed. As noted above, an extremely small LLv-6 air group was

based at the Turku airfield, which was armed with 3 captured SBs and 5 captured I-153 fighters. During the raid, one SB was damaged (according to other sources, it was destroyed), and this is **the only reliably known loss of Finnish aviation** from a "crushing blow to airfields" on June 25, 1941. In addition, one building was destroyed on the airfield of the airfield and 5 horses" (145, p. 229).

Bombers of the KBF Air Force in the Turku area lost no losses that day suffered.

Less successful for the attackers was the raid on the Rihimäki railway station, which was carried out by a group of DB-3 long-range bombers on the morning of June 25. Around 8:00 a.m., seven battered Fokkers from the LLv-32 air group based at the Hyvinkä airfield intercepted bombers near the village of Kerava (20 km northeast of Helsinki, that is, almost immediately after they crossed the coastline Gulf of Finland). In the memoirs of an LLv-32 veteran, the events of that morning are described as follows: *"The Russians immediately turned around and left in the opposite direction, but Lieutenant V.*

Evinen opened fire and shot down two enemy aircraft. One fell in the Malmi area, and the other in the water

Gulf of Finland. The alarm was sounded several more times that day at the Hyvinkä airfield, but thick clouds of dust from taking off enemy fighters and bombers turned back before the interceptors had time to rise into the sky (298) .

The report of two DB-3s shot down may be true, since only 1 MTAP (one of the two bomber regiments of the KBF Air Force, which were armed with long-range bombers of this type) irrevocably lost 3 aircraft in air battles of the first days of the war (271). On the same day, June 25, naval aviation attacked the ports of Kotka and Salo, the suburbs of Helsinki (18 aircraft bombed Tikkurila, 8 bombed Puistola) (145, p. 230). The central districts of the Finnish capital were not bombed (perhaps for foreign policy reasons, since in this case the diplomatic missions of Stalin's future main allies could become victims of the raids). Former navigator of the 1st MTAP, Lieutenant General P.I. Khokhlov in

writes in his remarkably "inaccurate" memoirs:

"Our regiment during this operation destroyed enemy aircraft at the airfields of Lahti and Lappeenranta. There, according to the observations of the crews, explosions and fires occurred, 17 German aircraft were destroyed (134). Even if the raids on Lahti and Lappeenranta are not the fruit of the fiction of the memoirist or his "litconsultants", it was very difficult to find "17 aircraft" there, and even identify them as "German". The Hollola and Vesivehmaa airfields (the main LLv24 base airfield) located near the city of Lahti were not subjected to Soviet air raids on June 25; moreover, taking into account that three squadrons of the best fighter group of the Finnish Air Force were based there, it can be reasonably assumed that a raid on Vesivehmaa would have led 1 MTAP to the same results as a raid by 72 BAPs on Joroinen airfield. As for the large railway station and the city of Lappeenranta, there was not a single unit of Finnish (not to mention German) aviation at the airfield located near the city ...

In the early morning of June 26, the combat operations of the KBF Air Force were resumed with the same scope and persistence.

At dawn (between 3 and 4 am) 9 SB bombers (18, according to other sources) reappeared in the sky over the city of Turku. A pair of I-153 Chaeks from LLv-6 went up to intercept, and in the area of the village of Korppoo (Åland Islands), ensign T. Hyamelya shot down one bomber, which, according to the report of ground observers, fell into the sea (52, p. 251). Three hours later, at 6:15 min. On June

26, a large group of bombers (22 SB according to Finnish data) again bombed the airfield, port and city of Turku. *"The runway and several hangars were damaged, three aircraft were damaged, one mechanic was killed and two people were injured. In the city, the damage was more significant, with 13 civilians killed and 29 injured. The entire seaside region of Turku was in flames, 18 stone and 101 wooden buildings were destroyed..."* (145, p. 230) Among the destroyed buildings was the medieval fortress of Turku. The next wave of bombers hit Turku from 10:20 to 11:05. On the same day, June 26, attacks were carried out on the suburbs of Helsinki, on the ports of Kotka, Porvoo, Sala, Malmi airfields (near Helsinki) and Utti. There were no other irretrievable losses, except for a bomber shot down over Korppoo in the early morning, by the Baltic Fleet Air Force on June 26, 1941.

suffered.

The Turku airfield was so badly damaged that the five I-153s from LLv-6 that survived the bombing were relocated to the Nummela airfield (40 km west of Helsinki) (52, p. 251). Thus, **the redeployment of enemy aircraft** under the influence of Soviet Air Force strikes **actually took place**. Only, it was not "German aircraft to distant rear airfields" that were relocated, but 5 (five) captured Soviet I-153s from Turku to Helsinki, that is, even closer to the Soviet coast of the Gulf of Finland.

Summing up the actions of the Air Force of the Baltic Fleet, it should be noted that they suffered significantly less - compared to the Air Force of the Northern Front - losses (two DB-2 bombers and one SB) and achieved noticeable (and in Turku - even very noticeable) results. air force

The Baltic Fleet was able to destroy **one enemy aircraft** (captured SB) and **disable the Turku airfield for some time**.

On the other hand, all attempts to disable the warships of the Finnish Navy were again unsuccessful. The capabilities of the DB-3 long-range bombers, which were in service with the KBF Air Force, were not used at all. With rare exceptions, bombing attacks were carried out on targets located directly on the coast of the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Bothnia. **Not a single raid into the interior of the country** was made. Neither the largest industrial center of Finland, the city of Tampere (specified in the Directive of the Civil Code of June 24), nor the base airfields of the Finnish bomber aviation (Siikakangas and Luonetjärvi), nor the most important airfields of the Finnish fighters (Pori, Hyvinkä, Vesivehmaa, Joroinen, Naarajärvi). In fact, the long-range bombers of the KBF Air Force, based at the airfields of Kotly and Bezzabotnoye (i.e., directly off the coast of the Gulf of Finland), operated at a much smaller radius than the bomber regiments of 41 BAD, equipped with SB light bombers. Statistics is the science of large numbers, and the results of two days of hostilities hardly allow for serious generalizations. Therefore, let's put it this way: **it is possible** that it was precisely this

tactic of the KBF Air Force (the choice of objects located directly on the coast, and the actual ignoring of the task set by the Directive of the Civil Code of June 24), combined with the weakness of the Finnish VNOS system, led to minimal losses of naval aviation bombers. In any case, there is no information that the KBF Air Force bombers and the fighters accompanying them repulsed the attack and shot down at least one Finnish fighter in the air.

At the end of the chronicle of events on June 25-26, it remains to briefly mention the combat operations of Soviet aviation in the polar north of

Finland. If the air strike on June 25, 1941 were in fact a reaction to the actions of German troops in Finland (even if the reaction was hasty and bad

organized), then the main forces of Soviet aviation should have been sent to objects in the Arctic, where four German divisions were finishing the last preparations for an attack on Murmansk and Kandalaksha. In fact, **no regrouping of the forces of the Air Force of the Northern Front and / or the Air Force of the internal military districts in the Murmansk direction was carried out**, and Soviet aviation operated in the same grouping in which it was caught on the evening of June 24 by the Directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code.

As noted in previous chapters, the Air Force of the Northern Fleet began active hostilities from the very first days of the war, and the first raid on the Hebukten airfield (in the territory of Norway occupied by the Germans) was made on June 23rd. On June 25, the zone of operations of the aviation of the Northern Fleet and the 14th Army of the Northern Front was only expanded due to the inclusion of strikes and airfields in Finland in the number of targets. The weather conditions really hindered the actions of aviation (almost the entire last week of June in the Murmansk-Petsamo area there was low cloud cover and it was raining), but the combat operations of the Soviet Air Force were still not as miserable as they are described in the first Operational reports of the headquarters of the Northern Front.

At 1:25 am on June 25, the Military Council of the Northern Fleet received the Directive of the People's Commissar of the USSR Navy on the start of hostilities against Finland. The directive basically repeated verbatim the text of the Directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code of June 24.

As in the instructions of the air force command of the Northern Front, *"the raids were ordered to be carried out during the day in small groups of three to nine aircraft, making at least four strikes on each airfield. The bombing height was set at 2500-3000 m, the results of the bombing were to be photographed. The first strike was to be delivered at 4:30, in the presence of clouds that prevented bombardment from a given height, bombarded from under the clouds "* (224). In addition to these general requirements, the People's Commissar of the Navy ordered *"among active actions against Finland to provide for an attack on Petsamo and the transports located in it, by aviation, as well as by artillery, coastal and naval"* (224).

Until June 24, intelligence reports of the 1st SAD (headquarters in Murmansk) name **only airfields in Norway** (Vadse, Hebukten, Banak, Tromsø, Narvik, Bodo, Trondheim) as German aviation bases . Only in Intelligence Report No. 5 (12:00 on June 24) does the message appear, however, not supported by anything and absolutely non-specific, the message: *"The presence of German aircraft and air groups on the territory of Finland has been established"* (300). Nevertheless, the fact that German aircraft were relocated (in fact, it was one squadron of fighters from JG-77) to the Luostari border airfield did not go unnoticed. It was the Luostari airfield that became (more precisely, should have become) the first object of a bombing attack in turn. In the early morning (the

words "at dawn" in this case are inappropriate, since at the end of June the sun in the Arctic does not set below the horizon) at 4:52 on June 25, eight "SB" from the 72nd SAP of the Air Force of the Northern Fleet flew out to bombard Luostari, but low cloudiness and fog forced the command to return the entire group to the airfield. But that was only the beginning of the day. At 13:50, a pair of SB scouts from 72 SAP approached the airfield at a low altitude of 500 meters and, despite anti-aircraft gun fire, passed over the airfield, while establishing the presence of

Messerschmitts at the airfield. After that, the next five SBs from the 72nd SAP from a height of 500 meters bombed the airfield of the Luostari airfield without loss (the enemy, however, also did not lose a single

aircraft during this raid). The fourth attempt to bomb the Luostari airfield was unsuccessful. The link of 72 SAP bombers, when approaching the target (we repeat once again that the Luostari airfield was only a few kilometers from the border), was fired upon by Soviet anti-aircraft gunners. Dodging anti-aircraft fire, the planes went into the clouds, where they lost their orientation, while one bomber could not find its airfield and made an emergency landing in the deserted tundra (where the plane lay until the end of the year). Luostari and several aircraft from the 137 BAP (1 SAD) bombed. Finally, at 18:00, four I-16 fighters from the 145 IAP of the same division (299) stormed the Luostari airfield. There were no losses from both ours and the German side in these raids.

Intelligence report No. 8 of the headquarters of the 1st SAD (dated 16:30 on June 25) recorded

the following result: *"During 25.06 of part 1 of the SAD, reconnaissance and combat operations established: enemy aircraft at the Luostari airfield, the number and type were not established. Planes are camouflaged with trees"* (301). More specific, but very inaccurate, were the military intelligence data of the 14th Army, according to which *"there were 8-10 camouflaged bombers and 6-8 fighters at the Luostari airfield."* Only on June 27 did the air reconnaissance data coincide with the real state of affairs: *"Aerial reconnaissance of the Northern Fleet detected up to 10 aircraft at the Luostari airfield"* (224). The Luostari airfield

was far from being the only object of air attacks on 25 June. Aviation of the Northern Fleet tried to bomb the Norwegian port of Kirkenes, but, having met with heavy fog, returned to the base. The Finnish port of Liinakhamari in the Petsamo region was bombed. On the evening of June 25, the Fleet Air Force bombed the Norwegian airfield Banak, where German bombers were based. The result of the raid is not exactly known, but two bombers of the Air Force of the Northern Fleet did not return from the mission. The report about four Me-110s shot down that day is not confirmed by enemy documents.

On June 26, 1941, the Air Force of the Northern Fleet carried out single and group raids on Petsamo, Kirkenes, Luostari and Vadsø. Judging by the documents of the fleet headquarters, *"fires broke out at enemy airfields ... fire from our coastal battery from the Sredny Peninsula and the bombing of our aircraft damaged a radio station in Petsamo, a fire was observed ..."* (224) Bombers from the 137 BAP (9 aircraft according to Finnish data) made a long-range raid deep into Finland and bombed the city and the airfield of Rovaniemi (more than 400 km in a straight line from Murmansk). The presence of up to 12 enemy aircraft (302) at the Rovaniemi airfield was recorded. On the same day, six SBs (probably also from the 137th BAP) bombed Kemijärvi. In both cases, losses and destruction were minimal (145, p. 234). The Luftwaffe long-range reconnaissance unit based in Rovaniemi, as well as the squadron

fighters at the Luostari airfield, **had no losses in aircraft** on June 25-26 .

Chapter

3.8 "Do not open fire first ..."

In the early morning (one might say - at night) on June 27, 1941, urgent messages flew from headquarters to headquarters (as it should be in such cases - stamped "top secret"): "Ryti declared Finland at war with the USSR." This uniformity of strange wordings (not "Finland announced", namely "Ryti announced") suggests that one command for all came "from the very top", and then was already duplicated in lower instances. The headquarters of the Northern Fleet sent out a warning about the beginning of the war at 2:15 on June 27. At the same time, *"all services were asked to increase their vigilance"* (224). The chief of staff of the 1st MK,

Colonel Limarenko, at 5:00 on June 27, sent the following message to all units and formations of the corps (a total of 18 copies were made): *"Ryti declared Finland at war with the Soviet Union. Take measures to increase combat readiness"* (303).

The order issued in 10 MK was more detailed: *"Ryti declared Finland at war with the USSR. Commander corps, in pursuance of the order of the army commander, ordered: Bring every single unit to full combat readiness for action.*

When the enemy opens fire, respond with all the might of our fire.

Reflect enemy tanks with the entire fire system. Our units are not the first to open fire. The combat readiness of the units for action should be checked personally by the commanders and this should be reflected in detail in the operational summary at 24:00 on June 27 and in a special combat report. Beginning

Headquarters 10 MK Colonel Zaev " (304). The copy of this Order preserved in the archive has no number, no date, no time. The previous document in the file is dated 0:20 am on June 27, so the order was signed between dawn and midnight on June 27. Possibly (according to

some points of content), the order was drawn up after the headquarters of the 10th mechanized corps received the following **Directive of the Military Council of the Northern Front**: *"To the commanders of the*

7th and 23rd Armies, the commanders of the 19th SC, 5 ° CK, 7 ° CK, 1MK, 10MK 1. The troops

of the Northern Front, being in constant readiness to repel the enemy offensive, continue to strengthen and develop defense lines, paying main attention to the creation of anti-tank obstacles, the preparation of obstacles and mining throughout the depth according to the plan. 2. Prior to the opening of hostilities, enemy ground units should not open fire. Only with

the opening of artillery fire by him first or during his sudden tank attack, to fall with all the might of our artillery on tanks, on reconnoitered firing positions of enemy artillery and areas of concentration of his tanks and infantry, and mortar fire on the initial position

infantry.

*Com. troops of the Northern Front Popov
Member of the Military Council Klementyev
Member of the Military Council*

Shtykov Member of the Military Council

Kuznetsov" (305) The form in this case is as remarkable as the content. The directive of the Military Council is issued without a number and without a date. True, on the very typewritten sheet with the text of the Directive there is a corner stamp: "Operational Department of the Headquarters of the LVO, Ref. No. 3009, 27.6.41" Why the "headquarters of the LVO", if already starting from the evening of June 22 all documents go on behalf of the commander and headquarters of the **Northern Front**, and this Directive was signed by the front commander, and not the district? Further, in the "header" of the Directive, there is no 14th Army (one of the three armies of the Northern Front), but there is a "7 ° CK" (70th Rifle Corps) that does not exist in reality. Most likely, the compilers meant "70th Rifle Division", i.e., the 70th Rifle Division, which actually existed, was not part of the rifle corps and was directly subordinate to the front command. Finally, the document does not have the signature of the chief of staff of the district - and this is already very strange. In accordance with the Regulations on the Military Council of the district, approved on May 16–17, 1937, the Armed Forces included three

person: commander, chief of staff and the so-called PMC (member of the Military Council, i.e. party representative, commissar) (146, p. 13). All known Combat Orders, Operational Reports and Directives of the first days of the war were signed by the Chief of Staff of the Northern Front, Major General Nikishev or (very rarely) his deputy, Chief of the Operations Department of the Staff, Major General Tikhomirov. There are no signatures here.

It remains to be assumed that the Directive was prepared in a hurry and nervous fuss. The most striking confirmation of the "nervous fuss" at the front headquarters is that the commander decided to back up his decision with the signatures of THREE party bosses at once: corps commissar N.N. Klementyev, First Secretary of the Leningrad City Committee, Divisional Commissar A.A. Kuznetsov and Second Secretary of the Leningrad Regional Committee, Brigadier Commissar T.F. Shtykov.

Now let's move on from the form to the content. What event so excited the military and party leaders of the highest ranks?

On the evening of June 25, the parliament decided to consider Finland as being at war against the USSR. The next day, June 26, 1941, President R. Ryti delivered a radio address to the nation:

"... Now that the Soviet Union, in connection with the war between Germany and the USSR, has extended its military operations to the territory of Finland, attacking civilians, it is our duty to defend ourselves, and we will do this decisively and unanimously with all the moral and military means at our disposal. Our chances of getting out successfully from this second defensive war this time are completely different than they were last time when we were under the onslaught of the eastern giant. The armed forces of great Germany, under the leadership of the brilliant leader Chancellor Hitler, are successfully fighting together with us against the armed forces of the USSR known to us ... The Soviet Union will now not be able to put up against our armed forces that crushing superior force that made our defensive struggle hopeless last time.

Now the Soviet Union finds itself in an equal struggle in terms of numbers, and the success of our defensive struggle is assured" (17, p. 54).

So what was so amazing seen (heard) by Soviet generals in Leningrad and marshals in Moscow? **What other reaction to the massive bombing of Finland did they expect?** And weren't the Finnish troops called "enemy troops" in all the documents of the units and formations of the Northern Front already starting from June 22-23?

Now let's move on from rhetorical questions to substantive questions. The directive of

the Military Council of the Northern Front clearly requires giving the initiative to the enemy (*"until the opening of hostilities by the ground units of the enemy, do not open fire. Only with the opening of artillery fire by him first or during his sudden tank attack ...*). Let's leave aside for now the repeated references to "enemy tanks" and the need to pay "main attention to the creation of anti-tank obstacles", which are found in the Directive of the Military Council and the order of the commander of the 10th mechanized corps (and this is in the complete absence of German or Finnish tank units on the front 23 th and 7th armies). Another thing is more important - why is it ordered "not to open fire first"? Why and why is it necessary to give the enemy the initiative and all the obvious tactical advantages of the first strike? The only possible explanation (and justification) for such a strange operational art can only be the sudden emergence of **political interests**

that prevailed over military expediency. So to speak, the "second coming" of the legendary idea "do not succumb to provocations." However, it is precisely this logic in this case that is simply striking in its absurdity. *"Ryti declared war."* Finland is already at war with the USSR. The war has already been officially declared, and there can be no "provocations" after that in principle. Now all that remains is to convey the corresponding statement of the Soviet government to the Finnish ambassador in Moscow and after that begin to implement the pre-war plans for "active defense". Without any restrictions.

In June 1941, everything was done exactly the opposite. June 25 **without a declaration of war, without recalling the ambassador from Helsinki, without**

official notice of the termination of the Moscow Peace Treaty of 1940, a massive bombing strike is inflicted on the territory of Finland. Even cities (Mikkeli and Rovaniemi) located at a depth of 100–150 km from the border are becoming objects of attack. Two days later, the troops located directly at the border were given the task of waiting for the enemy to go on the offensive, but not to open fire themselves first. That is, when it was impossible - then you can. And when is it already possible - not?

Order No. 1 of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Finnish Army, Marshal Mannerheim, signed on the same days, sounded much more specific: *“Soldiers of Finland!
Our glorious Winter War*

ended in a heavy peace. Despite the conclusion of peace, our country has been the object of shameless threats and constant blackmail to the enemy, which, together with criminal incitement aimed at undermining our unity, shows that the enemy did not consider peace to be permanent from the very beginning. The concluded peace was only a truce, which is now ended.

You know the enemy. You know the constancy of his goals aimed at the destruction of our dwellings, our faith and our Fatherland and the enslavement of our people. The same enemy and the same threat are now at our borders. For no reason,

he brazenly attacked our peaceful people and bombarded various parts of the country. The future of the Fatherland requires new feats from you.

I call you to a holy war against the enemy of our nation. Fallen war heroes rise from their graves and stand by our side today as we, together with the mighty military forces of Germany, like brothers in arms, embark with determination on a crusade against the enemy to secure a secure future for Finland. Companions! Follow me for the last time, now that the people of Karelia are rising again and a new dawn is dawning for Finland” (37).

Chapter

3.9 What was it?

We can now return to the questions that were formulated in Chapter 3.3. We list them in the order of increasing complexity indicated there.

- What forces (units, formations, aircraft) of the German and Finnish bomber aviation were based on the airfields of Finland? - What kind of military operations against the Soviet Union did this aviation group carry out during June 22-24, 1941? What actions were planned by the enemy command for the coming days and weeks? - What was the real scale of the threat posed

by the enemy aviation grouping in Finland, in comparison with both other threats hanging over Leningrad, and with the air defense capabilities of Leningrad, the fighter aviation of the Northern Front and the Red Banner Baltic Fleet? – What was the immediate result of the Soviet airstrike?

Air Force in Finland (losses of the parties, changes in the plans of the parties).

- What did the Soviet command, Soviet intelligence know about the deployment of enemy air units in Finland, about his actions and plans?

- What was the real reason for the decision on June 24, 1941 to launch an air strike on Finland, what were the real goals and objectives of this operation? - How did the air strike

on June 25 affect the general course of the war of the Soviet Union against Germany and its allies?

We will try to find the answer to the last of these questions in the next part of this book. As for the group of the first four questions, the real facts and quite reliable documents identified and described in the previous chapters make it possible to give exhaustive answers to them.

On the territory of Finland (at the airfields of Rovaniemi and Luonetjärvi), two links (total 6 aircraft) were based

aviation reconnaissance, and one squadron (a total of 10 serviceable Messerschmitts) of Luftwaffe fighters was based at the Luostari polar airfield. In addition, one squadron of German bombers (no more than 12 aircraft) from the KGr-806 air group based in East Prussia landed several times for refueling at the Finnish airfields Utti and Malmi (southern Finland). Active combat operations of Soviet and German aviation began from

the very first days of the war (that is, already June 22–23), but not over Leningrad, but in the Arctic, in the sky over Kirkenes, Petsamo, Murmansk, and the Rybachy Peninsula. Both sides of the outbreak of the war fought, regardless of the state borders of Finland. Soviet bombers attacked military targets in German-occupied Norway, German planes bombed the main base of the Northern Fleet in the Murmansk region, attacked Soviet ships in the Barents Sea, conducted aerial reconnaissance in the Murmansk and Kandalaksha regions.

All sorties of Luftwaffe aircraft in the Arctic were made **exclusively from airfields in Norway** (Hebukten and Banak). German fighters flew to the Finnish Luostari airfield only on June 24–25, and until the start of the offensive of the Wehrmacht ground forces on Murmansk, they did not participate in hostilities (not counting the repulse of Soviet Air Force attacks on the Luostari airfield). Bombers (long-range Ju-88s and diving Ju-87s) continued to be based on the large Norwegian airfields of Hebukten and Banak in the first weeks of the German offensive, and only much later, after the advance of ground forces to the east, did they begin to use the airfields in Luostari, Alakurtti, Kemijärvi. "German bombers based in Finland" did not carry out any raids on Leningrad

and the cities of Karelia. Not on the first or any of the subsequent days of the war. **For the simplest reason - they were never there.** In the early days of the war, the 1st Air Fleet of the Luftwaffe supported the combat operations of ground forces in the Baltic states, based on the airfields of East Prussia. And in the future, no relocation of German air units to the territory of southern and / or central Finland was carried out,

Yes, there was not the slightest operational sense in it - it was easier, closer and safer to bomb Leningrad from airfields on the territory of the occupied Pskov and Novgorod regions (bombers damaged during the raid did not have to fly more than 100 km over the water surface of the Gulf of Finland).

The issue of belonging (to the Soviet or German aviation) of several aircraft that dropped bombs on the Hanko Peninsula on June 22 needs further clarification. In any case, the Soviet military base, located on the actually occupied territory of Finland, cannot in any way be attributed to the list of "Leningrad and the cities of Karelia."

In the first two days of the war, German bombers twice mined the bay of the Kronstadt naval base, while aircraft (no more than 14 Junkers-88 from KGr-806 and Kü.Fl.Gr-506) landed for refueling at the Finnish airfields of Utti and Malmi . In the general scale of minelayings carried out by the Germans in the waters of the Gulf of Finland (more than 2.5 thousand mines of all types), these operations accounted for an insignificantly small proportion. Air mining was stopped on the second day of the war. Most likely because the risk of losing aircraft operating without any fighter cover in the zone of the most powerful air defense of Leningrad and Kronstadt was assessed by the German command as excessive, and most importantly - after the successful completion of mining exits from the Gulf of Finland for the Germans - no longer justified. The Soviet fighter aviation could and should have prevented the aerial mining of the Kronstadt Bay. After this did not happen, any actions - including the bombing of the Utti airfield - became only an example of what in Russian is called "waving your fists after a fight."

The extremely small Finnish bomber aviation (23 Blenheim and SB light twin-engine bombers) did not make any raids on Leningrad - not only in June 1941, but even when the Finnish army reached the border of 1939 and the front line passed in 30 km from the center of Leningrad. Throughout the war, Mannerheim's order was in effect in Finnish aviation, categorically forbidding any flights of Finnish aircraft over Leningrad. As for reconnaissance flights, which

Finnish aviation really conducted in the border zone even before the official declaration of war, then in this case the Finnish side only "mirror-reflected" the actions of the Soviet aviation, which conducted aerial reconnaissance of the territory of Finland, absolutely disregarding the borders, throughout the entire period of the "truce" (from March 1940 to June 1941). The fighter aviation grouping of

the Northern Front and the Air Force of the Baltic Fleet, concentrated in the region of Leningrad and the Karelian Isthmus, was one of the most powerful in all the Armed Forces of the USSR. Its numbers **were dozens of times greater than** the number of German aircraft (bombers or reconnaissance aircraft) that at least occasionally appeared on the airfields of southern and central Finland. In addition, the air defense system of Leningrad had the most powerful anti-aircraft artillery grouping, which had no equal in the world (the air defense of London and Berlin did not have such a number of anti-aircraft guns). The air defense system of Leningrad was built with the expectation of repulsing massive air raids by the largest European powers (Germany, England and their possible allies). Accordingly, the suggestion that two dozen Finnish or German bombers posed a "mortal threat to Leningrad" is completely absurd.

Just as absurd are the arguments that only such extraordinary measures as a sudden and treacherous attack on Finnish airfields could *"save Leningrad from the fate of cities subjected to fierce bombardment."* Unfortunately, Leningrad was subjected to a "violent bombardment." And not just once. If it is permissible to talk about history in the subjunctive mood, then Leningrad could have been saved from this bitter fate by successfully repulsing the offensive of the Wehrmacht in the Baltic states, creating a stable defense at the turn of the Western Dvina, and effective operations of fighter aircraft. This has nothing to do with Finland.

had.

As for the real tasks of the air strike that began on the morning of June 25, the assumption that it was directed against the German air and ground forces in Finland and had as its goal "the disruption of the impending raid on Leningrad" *can* arise only on the basis of studying the orders and directives of the Soviet

command. Yes, you can read something like that in the orders. The actual actions of the Soviet Air Force are very difficult to interpret in this way: 1. The only Luftwaffe unit

based in the vast expanses of southern and central Finland was a reconnaissance link (two Dornier Do-215 and one Heinkel He-111) at the Luonetjärvi airfield. It is absurd to discuss the "threat" that these three aircraft posed to

Leningrad, and yet if the goal of the operation was "the destruction of German aircraft based on Finnish airfields", then the Luonetjärvi airfield should have become the object of attack No. 1. But not a single Soviet plane did not appear in the sky over Luonetjärvi, and not a single bomb fell on the airfield of this airfield. 2. Speaking abstractly, Finnish bomber aircraft could have made a raid on Leningrad, but **not a single raid**

on its two main airfields (Siikakangas and Luonetjärvi) was carried out. 3. The Utti airfield, which was used to refuel German bombers on June 22-23, was included in the general list of targets, but no special

emphasis on its priority value is found either in the orders of the 41 BAD command or in the orders of the 2 SAD command. So, the 2nd SAD, having 142 serviceable bombers in its arsenal, allocated one link (three aircraft) from the 44th BAP for a raid on the Utti airfield, which link once bombed Utti from a height of 6.5 km. 41 BAD bombed the airfields of Valkeala and Utti, while performing a total of 12 sorties (for the two named airfields). This can hardly be called the fulfillment of the Directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code of June 24, which required *"continuous raids day and night to defeat enemy aircraft and eliminate airfields."* 4. The ports of the Gulf of Bothnia (Oulu and Vaasa), through which the 169th Wehrmacht Infantry Division was delivered to the territory of Finland (and in which, probably, some units of German troops still remained), were not

subjected to a single blow - and this despite the fact that the distance from the airfields based on long-range bombers of the KBF Air Force (1 MTAP, Bezzabotnoye airfield and 57

BAP, Kotly airfield) is no more than 600-650 km. This action undoubtedly corresponds to the radius of the DB-3 / DB-3f long-range bombers, which were in service with the two indicated regiments in the amount of 91 serviceable aircraft.

5. If the bombardment of the ports of the Gulf of Bothnia could be considered a belated attempt to "catch up with the departed train", then the destruction of the Oulu-Rovaniemi-Salla railway line could have the most serious consequences, since the entire grouping of German troops in the Arctic was supplied through it. Nevertheless, even attempts to solve this problem were not made, and **not a single raid on the railway stations of this main line was made**. Now let's approach the

assessment of the course and outcome of the air strike on June 25–26 from the other side: what objects actually became targets for bombers? In total,

at least 12 targets were attacked (excluding airfields), namely: - large railway

stations (Rihimäki, Kouvola, Luumäki, Lappeenranta, Mäntylampi, Mikkeli, Joensuu);

– the main ports of the Gulf of Finland (Turku, Salo, Porvoo, Kotka); suburbs of

Helsinki. If we now compare this list with the pre-war Plan for covering the mobilization and operational deployment of the troops of the Northern Front (Leningrad District), we will immediately find a clear similarity of goals and objectives: “ *Powerful strikes against the Kouvola railway junction, bridges across the river. Kymin-Yoki and groupings of troops to disrupt and delay the concentration and deployment of enemy troops ... by active aviation operations to ensure air superiority and powerful strikes to disrupt transportation in the concentration in the area of Joensuu, Kajaani,*

Kuopio ... "The 12 airfields of the southern and central Finland, which were to become the targets of priority strikes: Kouvola, Kotka, Utti, Selyanpyä, Mikkeli, Porvoo, Lahti, Hollola, Hiitula, Podosjoki, Savonlinna, Hamina.

Most likely, having received the Directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code on June 24, the command of the Air Force of the Northern Front (as well as the command

Air Force of the Baltic Fleet) took out pre-war operational plans from the safe and based them on orders for the "first multi-day operation". And in this case, one cannot but admit that the Headquarters simply did not leave them time either for additional reconnaissance of targets or for the thorough preparation of the strike itself (interaction with fighters, the optimal choice of ammunition, etc.). Which, however, does not remove the question of why half of the "previously identified enemy airfields" did not exist at all and, conversely, many of the most important airfields (Vesivehmaa, Naarajärvi, Joroinen, Hyvinkä, Siikakangas, Luonetjärvi) were not included in this list. In general, the "first multi-

day operation of the Soviet Air Force" is simply striking in its disorganization and inefficiency. Let's re-read the description of this operation in the version of Major General, Professor and Doctor of Science M.N. Kozhevnikov:

"... The Air Force Command of the Northern Front developed and approved on June 24 the Military Council of the Northern Front a plan for the destruction of enemy aircraft at airfields in the northwestern direction. A total of 540 aircraft were involved in the operation. Early on the morning of June 25, 236

bombers and 224 fighters launched the first massive attack on 19 airfields. The enemy, not expecting such a strike, was actually taken by surprise and failed to organize countermeasures. As a result, Soviet pilots successfully bombed aircraft stands, fuel and ammunition depots. 41 enemy planes were destroyed at the airfields. Our aviation had no losses. In the next five days, several more effective strikes were delivered on the same airfields and those

newly discovered by air reconnaissance. According to aerial photographic control, Soviet pilots, having attacked a total of 39 airfields, made about 1,000 sorties, destroyed and disabled 130 enemy aircraft. The command of the German fascist troops in Finland and Northern Norway was forced to withdraw its aviation to distant rear airfields and abandon the raid on Leningrad in the near future ... "

The only words of truth in this text should be recognized as geographical names (Leningrad, Finland, Norway) and

name of the month (June). Everything else - against the backdrop of real, tragic and shameful facts - looks like an example of "black humor".

The operation lasted exactly two days, and already on the second day (June 26), the bomber units of the Air Force of the Northern Front carried out only a few reconnaissance flights over Finnish territory. The total number of airfields actually based on Finnish aviation, which became the object of a bomb attack, is five (Turku, Valkeala, Utti, Mikkeli, Joroinen). Perhaps one more airfield can be added to this list, which was named by the navigator of the 1st MTAP as "Lahti airfield" (perhaps it was the airfield in Hollola). If we take into account the polar airfield Luostari, then the total number of airfields attacked with almost no results will reach seven. **Only at one airfield (Turku) was a single aircraft disabled.** By a strange twist of fate, it turned out to be a captured Soviet SB bomber. All other "airfield strikes" were either completely ineffective, or led to heavy losses of the attackers (9 bombers of 72 "BAP" shot down during a raid on the Joroinen airfield). In two days, the Air Force of the Northern Front and the Air Force of the Baltic Fleet irrevocably lost 24 bombers. **The main Finnish fighter airfields (Pori, Hyvinkä, Vesivehmaa, Joroinen, Naarajärvi) were not damaged at all.** There was no "relocation of enemy aircraft to distant rear airfields" at all. Absolutely fantastic figures ("*39 airfields*", "*130 enemy aircraft*") cannot be even remotely connected with any real events ...

Such a **striking discrepancy between the stated goal, the actions taken and the result achieved** makes us return to history again with the advent of the Directive of the Civil Code of June 24th. But was she really? This question can be given a completely accurate answer. There was a directive. In the archive of the General Staff, its handwritten original with the handwritten signature of Marshal Timoshenko has been preserved. The main value of the original document is that there were marks on it about the time of transfer of the Directive to the encryption department of the General Staff: 22 hours 25 minutes

Sent to recipients at 22:40. These figures look amazing next to the last phrase of the Directive: *"Copies of the given orders to convey to me by 24:00 on 24.6.41."* That is, an hour and a half was given to make a decision and draw up orders for subordinates to the command of the Northern Front. And this despite the fact that in the previous two days (June 22-23) the headquarters of the Northern Front and the Northern Fleet received from Moscow categorical instructions of the exact opposite content ("do not cross the border with Finland and do not fly over").

Many "copies of the given orders" have also been preserved. Here, for example, is an order given by the commander of the Northern Front (for the period of the operation he was granted such a right) to the Military Council of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet (375). The content almost verbatim repeats the Headquarters Directive (*"according to reliable data, the Germans are preparing a strike on Leningrad"*), but again, the time is interesting: the first strike on Finnish airfields was ordered to be delivered at 4:35, and a copy of the order was sent to Moscow at 3:50 (received at the General Staff and even later, at 5:30). Even if we assume that the order itself from Leningrad to Tallinn (there was then the Main Fleet Base and the headquarters of the KBF) was sent a few minutes earlier, a picture of incredible (close to panic) haste is unfolding before us. The situation was assessed as an emergency. They demanded the impossible from subordinates, apparently hoping that they

would have time to do at least something. And what actually happened? Where does this feeling of an inevitable threat looming over Leningrad come from, for the prevention of which supernatural efforts must be made? Let's re-read the first, ascertaining part of the Directive of the Civil

Code Stakes: *"1. From reliable sources it has been established that German troops are concentrating on the territory of Finland, with the aim of striking at Leningrad and capturing the Murmansk region and Kandalaksha. To date, up to four infantry divisions have been concentrated in the Rovaniemi, Kemijärvi area and a group of unknown strength in the areas of Kotka and north of the Hanko Peninsula."*

German aviation also systematically arrives on the territory of Finland, from where it carries out raids on our territory. According to reports, the German command intends to launch an air strike on Leningrad in the near future. This circumstance is of decisive importance.

2. *In order to prevent and disrupt an air strike on Leningrad, planned by the German command in Finland, I ORDER ...* "It is impossible not to

notice the obvious inconsistency of this text: unnamed, but "reliable sources" established that German troops of "unknown number" are concentrated in southern Finland .

If the size of the grouping has not been established even tentatively, and the area of its deployment has been determined with an "accuracy" of 200 km (from Hanko to Kotk), then what is the "reliability" of these mysterious "sources"? It is worth noting a very strange area for the deployment of a ground grouping, which allegedly *"has the goal of striking at Leningrad."* How can one get to Leningrad from the strip along the northern coast of the Gulf of Finland? Carry out an amphibious landing operation under the cover of two ill-fated battleships? Or wait for January, when the bay will be covered with solid ice? On the other hand,

the size of **the real grouping** of German troops in the Arctic is determined very accurately (*"up to four infantry divisions"*). In fact, two mountain rifle divisions were deployed in the Petsamo area, and in the Kemijärvi-Salla area - one infantry division (169 infantry division) and a motorized brigade (outnumbering the division) of the SS Nord. The task assigned by the German command to these formations is precisely defined (*"to capture the region of Murmansk and Kandalaksha"*). In parentheses, we note that this is by no means a trivial conclusion. Although both of these toponyms (Murmansk and Kandalaksha) are found in the same line on the pages of most books devoted to the events of the war in the Arctic, in reality these two cities are separated by a strip of deserted rocky desert 200 km wide. The capture of Murmansk and Kandalaksha is not one, but two independent operations, during which the troops of the two strike groups will not even have

"elbow connection". The mistake in determining the exact area of concentration of German troops (*"concentrated up to four infantry divisions in the area of Rovaniemi, Kemijärvi"*) is understandable and understandable: until the morning of June 22, German troops (169 infantry division and the SS Nord brigade) were on the move across the territory of Finland, and the grouping aimed at capturing Murmansk (2nd and 3rd mountain rifle divisions) crossed the Norwegian-Finnish border in the Kirkenes-Petsamo strip only

on June 22. Of course, the impending enemy attack on Murmansk required a response - but where is Murmansk and where is Leningrad? There, the distance is like across Europe from Hamburg to Genoa, only the climate is not Italian and the roads are not German. It was possible not to flog the fever ... As for the grouping of German aviation, allegedly concentrated on the airfields of Finland, this "circumstance of decisive importance" is not specified in any way: there is neither combat nor numerical strength of the enemy, there is no intelligible description of the geography of his base.

And now - the last and most important question: who are these "reliable sources" through which the disinformation was presented to Stalin on the evening of June 24? The documents of the special services are still inaccessible - even 75 years after the events discussed, that is, in a situation where all the agents and residents mentioned in them have long since passed away. Nevertheless, since we know the exact time of sending the Directive of June 24, crumbs of useful information can also be extracted from the textbook-famous "Journal of Visits" of Stalin's office.

People's Commissar Timoshenko, Chairman of the Defense Committee (not to be confused with the State Defense Committee!) Voroshilov and First Deputy Chief of the General Staff Vatutin (Chief of the General Staff Zhukov was on the Southwestern Front that day) entered Stalin's office at 17:30 and left at about 9 pm. In the Boss's office all this time (as well as before and after) there were Molotov and Beria - people from the "closest circle", in those days practically day and night in Stalin's office. But at 20:00 a man who was an extremely rare guest entered the office: Lieutenant General F. Golikov, head of the Intelligence

Directorate of the General Staff. And this event (yes, it is an event!) is quite extraordinary.

In the system of subordination built by Stalin, the head of the Intelligence Agency was far in the background. In less than four months before the war (March, April, May and June until the 24th), Comrade Golikov appeared in Stalin's office only once (April 11), and even then for 30 minutes. So the very fact of the appearance of the head of the RU General Staff in Stalin's office can already serve as a sufficient basis for the version that on the evening of June 24, intelligence of an emergency nature was discussed there. But was Golikov himself a source of disinformation about the concentration of German aviation in southern Finland? Or was he called in order to get from him an assessment of the information received from other "reliable sources", in other words, from allied Chekists?

Lieutenant-General Golikov left Stalin's office at 21:20, and after that (!) he signs another Intelligence Report No. a few hours later). It is in it that appears - for the first, only and last time - information about the concentration of German aviation in southern Finland. Moreover, in a very interesting wording: *"According to the information received, Berlin transmitted the following instructions to Finland by **secret telephone** (emphasized by me. - M.S.) : on June 24 or in the morning of June 25, an additional 25 thousand German soldiers and the best air units with the goal of going on the offensive against Leningrad from Finland; in case of failure, subject military installations to complete destruction: factories and railway stations" (376).*

A careful reading of other Intelligence reports of the RU General Staff for June 1941 shows that in most cases quite specific expressions are used there: *"according to front-line intelligence ... undercover intelligence established ... during the hostilities identified ..."* The information received from the "allied" directly and is called: "According to the NKGB." The vague wording (*"according to information received"*) used in the Intelligence Report of 22:00 on June 24 is not found anywhere else. The mysterious *"best air units"* of the Luftwaffe, who were about to bomb Leningrad, later disappear from the reports of the Intelligence Agency, moreover, "in English" - without saying goodbye,

silently and without explanation. In the summary of the RU General Staff No. 4/660751 dated 22:00 on June 25, the composition and number of German troops in northern Finland are significantly overestimated, but no one plans to "go on the offensive against

Leningrad from

Finland": "Northern Front On the entire front, units continue to *advance the enemy to our border and preparing them for active hostilities. On June 25, military and undercover intelligence data confirmed the deployment of German troops in Finland in the following grouping:*

a) Petsam direction (Kirkenes region, Petsamo) - up to 3 divisions, including 2 mountain divisions, and 150

aircraft; b) Rovaniemi direction (Savukoski, Rovaniemi, Kuusamo area) - up to 4 divisions, of which at least 2 motorized, 2-3 tank battalions and up to 1 Finnish brigade;

c) an unexplained concentration of German troops was noted in the areas of Suomussalmi, in Helsinki and, obviously, German mechanized units in the Kouvola direction. According to intelligence information, in the coming days, one German division is expected to arrive from Stetin in the Kuopio direction (central Finland; in fact, it was the 163rd Infantry Division, which on June 26 received an order to advance, but not from German Stetin, but from Norwegian Oslo. - M.S.). 100 aircraft arrived in the Rovaniemi area.

Thus, the main blow of the German troops is planned in the Kandalaksha direction and the auxiliary one - in Murmansk. The main grouping of the Finnish army after its deployment is determined in the Kouvola direction with its reinforcement by German mechanical units " (377). At the end

of the multi-page Intelligence Report of June 25, information appears on the number of German aviation: "By June

24, the German Air Force operating against the USSR has the following grouping: 5th

Air Fleet (Norway and Finland) - 400 aircraft; Baltic grouping (in the north-east of Germany) - 830

aircraft;

*1st Air Fleet (East Germany and Poland) - 2000
aircraft; 4th Air
Fleet (Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia) - 1400
aircraft;
6th Air Fleet (Romania, Bulgaria, Greece) - 1660
aircraft.*

A total of 6290 aircraft " (378).

The numbers of the Air Fleets and their deployment are confused, the total number is ugly overestimated, but, remarkably, the general proportions are generally observed: the aviation grouping in Norway and Finland, according to the Summary, is slightly more than 6% of the total number of aircraft involved against the USSR.

Speaking abstractly, one can name another potential supplier of disinformation - fleet intelligence (all the more so since the People's Commissar of the Navy N.G. Kuznetsov was in Stalin's office on June 24, however, for a very short time, only 15 minutes from 16:45 to 17:00). However, the documents that have become available now strongly refute such an assumption.

The intelligence reports of the First Directorate of the Navy for June 23–27 (Nos. 649–658) on the whole quite adequately describe the situation “in the Northern and Baltic theaters” (379). What is noteworthy, the origin of information is always clearly recorded (“according to radio interception ... according to undercover intelligence ... according to observations of posts ...”). Intelligence fixes (with some, by 20-30 percent, an underestimation, but not at all with an overestimation of the number) the basing of German aviation in Norway and the continuous transfer of aircraft to the airfields of northern Norway. Honestly and accurately (without exaggerating the scale of the event and their own successes), two Luftwaffe raids on Kronstadt are described, during which the Germans carried out mining of the bay of the naval base. The inevitable for June 41st reports of “German parachute landings” are subsequently conscientiously refuted. In the evening report for June 23, with reference to undercover sources, the arrival on June 22 in the Finnish ports of the Gulf of Bothnia of “60 German transports with troops and weapons” was noted. That's right - this is the 169th Infantry Division of the Wehrmacht, which then marched to the area of the polar Kemijärvi to attack Kandalaksha.

The first appearance of German aircraft at the polar Finnish airfield Luostari is recorded on the evening of June 24 (Reconnaissance report No. 653 at 19:00 on June 24), however, it is very inaccurate: at first these aircraft are identified as bombers of an unspecified number, then in the morning report of June 27 they turn into "8-10 bombers and 6-8 fighters"; in fact, on the eve of the attack on Murmansk, a single squadron of fighters consisting of 10 Messerschmitts was relocated to Lowstari. Evening report No. 653 at 19:00 on June 24 ends with the following conclusions: regarding the Northern Theater - *"concentration of military aviation continues at the Kirkenes airfield, on the approaches to Kirkenes patrols"*; according to the Baltic theater - *"enemy ships and aircraft are actively operating in the areas of our bases, landing on Hanko is possible."* There is not a word about the basing of at least some German air units in the southern and central regions of Finland. They are not mentioned in the operational reports of the Main Naval Staff for June 22–26.

Conducted its reconnaissance and aviation. The number of German aircraft is continuously monitored in the Intelligence reports of the headquarters of the 1st SAD (Murmansk). The planes, judging by these reports, are exactly where they were in reality, that is, in Norway. Their number is set quite close to

reality: - Intelligence report No. 4 (19:00 on June 23) *"Enemy aviation has been established at airfields: Hebukten - up to 50 aircraft, Banak - up to 32, Tromsø - up to 30, Narvik - up to 20, Bode (Bodø) - up to 11, Trondheim -*

up to 45 " (309). - Intelligence report No. 10 (23:00 on June 26) *"at 18:10, 8-10 bombers and 6-8 fighters were camouflaged at the Luostari airfield, up to 12 aircraft stood at the Rovaniemi airfield"* (310).

Comparing these reports with the actual state of affairs known today, we see that the total number of aircraft of the 5th Luftwaffe Air Fleet in Norway is significantly underestimated (188 instead of about 280), but the number of aircraft of the "Kirkenes compound", concentrated at Hebukten and Banak airfields for support attack on Murmansk, it is indicated quite plausibly (in fact, there were 54 bombers and long-range reconnaissance aircraft, 26

fighters "Bf-109" and "Me-110"). In other words, the 1st SAD reconnaissance had a very vague idea of the number of German aviation in the south of Norway far from it (i.e., thousands of kilometers from Murmansk), but it identified its direct enemy quite accurately. The June 26 report significantly overestimates (and for some reason in exact accordance with the Navy intelligence data) the number of aircraft at the Finnish Luostari airfield, but in general, intelligence information has a great resemblance to reality. Thus, by the method of elimination, we are steadily approaching the hypothesis that the "reliable sources" were not of the army or navy, but of the KGB origin. This is all the more likely that to this day the heirs of the NKGB publish books with stories about how they recruited armfuls of "prominent public and political figures" in Helsinki. Alas, in complex and multi-level espionage games, the recruited and the recruiter often change places, and it is already difficult to understand who used whom and in whose hands the "secret phone" turned out to be in reality. And hardly anyone, except Lavrenty Beria, possessed "apparatus weight" sufficient to, like this, in one evening, on the basis of rumors that no one else confirmed, persuade Stalin to rash decisions. However, in Stalin's willingness to succumb to a provocation, there was one more - much more important for the purposes of our study - reason.

Stalin did not see anything fateful in the decision he made on the evening of June 24, because in his ideas the war with Finland was already in full swing (strictly speaking, this war had not stopped for Stalin since December 1939, and Mannerheim was absolutely right that for the Soviet Union concluded on March 12, 1940, the peace treaty was only a temporary truce). The Master's mindset was inevitably passed on to his subordinates, and we see that the Finnish troops were designated in operational documents with the word "enemy" from the morning of June 22, that is, at a time when embassies continued to work in Moscow and Helsinki, and there was no denunciation of the peace treaty and speech. In post-war memoirs, Soviet generals without a shadow of embarrassment express their sincere surprise that "Finland did not attack our country at the same time as Hitler's Germany."

In thick books, the reason for such a perception of reality is called the tricky term "psychological projection", and in simple colloquial speech - the well-known adage "everyone judges to the extent of his depravity." Stalin knew for certain how much grief and harm he had caused Finland, and it was enough for him to imagine himself in Mannerheim's place for half a second to feel the fullness of hatred and a burning desire to slam an ax between the shoulder blades at the first opportunity. And I think that Stalin was absolutely right - the feelings were just like that. However, insane ardor has never been listed among the characteristic features of the Finnish people, and with sound reasoning, the situation seemed very complex and not at all unambiguous.

In the task that fate set on June 22, 1941 for the Finnish leadership, there were three unknowns: would the Red Army be able to resist the Wehrmacht, how would Great Britain behave in a qualitatively new situation, what position would the United States take? Strictly speaking, there was even a fourth question: what if Stalin comes to his senses? And what is so fantastic in this matter, if today we know for certain that in the real history of Comrade. Stalin changed his mind and on July 30, 1941, an agreement was signed with the "bourgeois, émigré, White-Pan government of the former Poland", in the first line of which "territorial changes", i.e. the division of Poland according to the secret protocol to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, were declared invalid. Yes, of course, at that time it was easy for Stalin to abandon the so-called. western Belarus and western Ukraine, which he actually lost a month ago - after all, before the liquidation, alas, violent and bloody, "territorial changes" in Finland, less than six months remained ... Be that as it may, in this whirlwind of events

shaking Europe, the only reasonable position for Finland it was "not to run ahead of the locomotive", to wait, monitor the situation and not bind itself with irreversible decisions and actions. On the other hand, the Finnish "hawks" managed to bind themselves with secret agreements with Germany even before June 22. On the third hand, Finland - in contrast to the southern allies of Hitler (Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Croatia), where semi-fascist or openly fascist

regimes, was and remained a democratic parliamentary republic. And out of 200 seats in the Finnish parliament, 85 belonged to the Social Democrats and only 8 seats (4% of all votes) were occupied by deputies from the far-right anti-communist Patriotic People's Movement (IKL) party. With such a balance of political forces, steps taken secretly from the people and parliament to draw Finland into the war on the side of Nazi Germany could cause the sharpest reaction. On June 20, President Risto Ryti met with members of the

Social Democratic faction of parliament and assured them that Finnish troops would not be used to attack the Soviet Union. And on the eve of this meeting, on June 19, the leader of the Social Democrats, one of the most influential politicians in the country, V. Tanner (foreign minister during the "winter war"), at a meeting of leaders of trade unions and workers' organizations, said that "our troops will be used only for *defense country, but not for offensive actions*. On June 25, a session of parliament, closed to the press, dedicated to discussing the foreign policy situation, was scheduled (without any connection with the Soviet bombings!) Mannerheim's statement was planned as follows: "*The government intended on June 25 to make a statement in parliament that it had decided to support the neutrality of Finland. The Prime Minister's report was already ready on June 24 in the evening, but the events of the next day forced the government to reconsider the issue ...*" (22, p. 376) In this case, Mannerheim, to put it mildly, is cunning (which, however, is understandable, given that in those months of the late 40s, when the state independence of Finland hung

by a thin thread). On the evening of June 24, 1941, Wehrmacht divisions were already marching across Finland and preparing to invade the USSR. This cannot be called a policy of "support for neutrality". Most likely, Prime Minister Y. Rangel was preparing for a difficult conversation with parliamentarians, and this conversation could well end in the resignation of the cabinet.

Changing a government is no easy task. Could Finland change the course actually taken to a joint war with Germany against the USSR? The criterion of truth is practice. What are we arguing about?

Finland quite practically changed course, in the fall of 1944 she demanded the disarmament and withdrawal of German troops from its territory, and when the former allies, who saved Finland from Soviet occupation in June 1944 (which will be discussed in the following chapters of our book), hesitated a little, then they were driven out by fire. With a strong desire, Finland, even in 1941, could cope with 3-4 German divisions abandoned in the Arctic, the supply of which - from cartridges to food - was kept solely on transit through Finnish territory. But such a strong desire could only arise in response to Stalin's decisive actions to normalize relations, which normalization **could only begin with the return of the territories annexed in 1940.**

Decisive action has come. With the grace of an elephant in a china shop Comrade. Stalin closed the most complicated military-political problem. A tough discussion in the Finnish parliament was interrupted before it even started. To the accompaniment of bombings in the suburbs of Helsinki, Prime Minister Rangel declared: *"The air raids against our country, the bombing of undefended cities, the killing of civilians - all this showed more clearly than any diplomatic assessments what is the attitude of the Soviet Union towards Finland. This is war. The Soviet Union repeated the attack with which it tried to break the resistance of the Finnish people in the "winter war" of 1939-1940. As then, we will stand up for our country."* After that, the deputies made the only decision possible in such a situation - to declare war on the Soviet Union. The Soviet bombings took place so timely (from the point of view of the interests of Hitler and the Finnish "hawks") that it is very difficult to believe in the coincidence of such a coincidence ...

Or maybe it was much easier. No complex disinformation operation of the German intelligence services. There was only another round of clan struggle in the inner circle of the Master. The beginning of the war (and even SUCH a beginning!) could not help but provoke an attack of bestiality between the old party comrades. Saving themselves and / or trying to "fill up" Tymoshenko, someone could persistently draw Stalin's attention to the "myopia and criminal carelessness" of the army leadership, which had already "overslept" one sudden b

enemy, and now he is preparing to oversleep the second such strike on Leningrad. In any case, the historian has no right to ignore another strange coincidence - it was on these days of June 1941 (the exact date of arrest is unknown) that the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR, the Plenipotentiary Representative of the Headquarters on the Northern Front, the former Chief of the General Staff of the Red Army, fell into the torture cellars of the NKGB Army General K.A. Meretskov. This real event allows us to formulate another, extremely unsteady and practically unprovable hypothesis. Those interested can read it in the next chapter.

Chapter

3.10 Arrest of Meretskov

Kirill Afanasyevich Meretskov was born on June 7, 1897 in the village of Nazaryevo, Zairisk district, Ryazan province. From the age of fifteen he worked as a mechanic at factories and factories in Moscow. In May 1917, at less than 20 years old, he joined the Bolshevik Party. In the summer of 1918, he organized a detachment of the Red Guard in the city of Sudogda, Vladimir province, with which he took part in the suppression of "kulak revolts". He was wounded in battle, after recovery he was sent to study at the newly created General Staff Academy. The civil war continued, and Meretskov, like other students of the academy, went to the front several times. For some time in 1920, he was assistant chief of staff of the 6th Cavalry Division, commanded by Timoshenko, the future People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR. After graduating from the academy in

1921, the young staff officer begins to rapidly rise through the ranks. In July 1928, at the age of 31, he became Deputy Chief of Staff of the Moscow Military District, then Chief of Staff of the Moscow and Belorussian Military Districts. In the Belorussian district, located on the border with the main potential enemy at that time - Poland, Meretskov was chief of staff under Uborevich - one of the most prominent Soviet commanders, who in 1937 became the main person involved in the "military Trotskyist conspiracy." In January 1935, Meretskov was appointed chief of staff of the Special Red Banner Far Eastern Army, that is, chief of staff of another future "enemy of the people" - holder of the Order of the Red Banner No. 1 (according to other sources, Order No. 1 was awarded to Nestor Makhno), the future marshal Blucher. In the autumn of 1936, Meretskov was sent to Spain, where he served as military adviser to the General Staff of the Republican Army.

Any of these three episodes of the biography: connection with the "exposed enemy of the people" Uborevich, connection with the "exposed enemy of the people" Blucher, personal participation in Stalin's failed attempt

to gain a foothold in the Pyrenees - it would be enough to disappear forever in the bloody meat grinder of the 37-38s. So, in addition to everything, Meretskov in 1931 was also on an internship in Germany. However, nothing terrible happened - Meretskov continued his steady ascent, not missing "a single step." In September 1938, he was appointed commander of the Volga, and the following year - of the Leningrad military districts. Despite the tragic failure of the plan he personally developed for the "liberation" of Finland, Meretskov received the Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union, the rank of army general, and in August 1940 became chief of the General Staff of the Red Army. Above this, only the post of People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR could be, but such a peak was inaccessible to

Meretskov in principle - he was not among the status "heroes of the Civil War", associates of Voroshilov, Timoshenko, Budyonny, Kulik in the 1st Cavalry Army, Stalin's accomplices in reprisal with Trotsky and the "Trotskyists". In any case, the position of Chief of the General Staff meant access to the most important military secrets of the country. The mobilization plan, plans for the strategic deployment of the Red Army, plans for the production of military equipment and ammunition, operational and mobilization plans for districts - all these top-secret documents passed through the hands of the Chief of the General Staff. Accordingly, the appointment to such a position meant the highest degree of confidence of Comrade Stalin in the young (43 years old) general of the army.

In January 1941 Meretskov's continuous career curve made its first, as yet completely reversible, bend. Stalin appoints the "rising star" of the Soviet generals, the hero of Khalkhin-Gol G.K., to the post of Chief of the General Staff. Zhukov. Meretskov's resignation was more than honorable. He retained the rank of Army General and was appointed to the post of Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR for combat training of troops. On the eve of the Great War, this was the most important post, the appointment to which again testified to the complete trust in Meretskov from Stalin and his inner circle, including the People's Commissar of Defense Tymoshenko himself.

On June 21, 1941, by decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee (that is, in fact, by the decision of Stalin), Meretskov was appointed authorized

representative of the high command of the Red Army on the Northern Front and immediately leaves for the place of the new service in Leningrad. On June 23, 1941, on the second day of the war, the Headquarters of the High Command was created. Under the Headquarters, the institution of "permanent advisers to the Headquarters" was formed. Meretskov was among them along with such trusted people of Stalin as Molotov, Beria, Shaposhnikov, Zhdanov, Kulik,

Malenkov, Mekhlis... Meretskov's fall from the heights of power into the blinding darkness of the Lubyanka cellars was lightning fast and stunning. On June 23, he was recalled from Leningrad to Moscow and a few days later (the exact date of his arrest is unknown) he was handed over to the executioners of the NKGB. The only thing that can be said with all certainty is that the arrest of the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense could not have taken place without the direct sanction of the "Master" himself. No "Beria satraps" independently resolved such issues (not to mention the fact that during the indicated period of time, Comrade Beria had no direct relationship with the leadership of the NKGB). In early September 1941, Meretskov was released and sent straight from his prison cell, again as a representative of the Headquarters, to the Karelian Front. Soon he was appointed commander of the 7th Army, then the Volkhov and Kare

Meretskov's health and strength were irretrievably undermined. According to a widespread historical legend, Stalin even allowed the general, mutilated by torture, to report while sitting. Khrushchev writes in his memoirs: *"When I saw Meretskov for the last time, it was no longer Meretskov, but his shadow. He used to be a young general, a physically strong, strong man, but now he could barely walk ... "* Although Meretskov did not achieve great (and small) successes in commanding the fronts, Stalin awarded him the rank of marshal (October 26, 1944) and cavalier the highest military order "Victory" (September 8, 1945). In August 1945, Stalin allowed Meretskov to become the figurehead of the 1st Far Eastern Front and the victor of the Japanese Kwantung Army. The epithet "nominal" is only a statement of the sad truth. Meretskov did not know either the troops entrusted to him or the enemy; the last time he was in the Far East was 9 years ago. And if Japan by that time had not already been knocked out by American bombing, then such a command could have led to the most sad consequences ...

But Stalin, apparently, decided to give Meretskov the opportunity to enter the history of the war in the halo of at least one bright victory. Around the story of the

unexpected arrest and even more surprising release of K.A. Meretskov grew a lot of all sorts of legends. In particular, one often has to read that "Meretskov's arrest was a foregone conclusion long before June 1941." As proof of this thesis, rumors are cited that by the time of the arrest, "investigators" had already accumulated testimonies from 40 people about Meretskov's "sabotage activities". Such "logic" is based, alas, on an elementary misunderstanding of the mechanism of functioning of the Stalinist dictatorship. Compromising evidence was constantly accumulated on **every** top military or party dignitary without exception. This system was debugged and put on "line production". Moreover, according to the procedure established at the end of the 30s, the "specialists" regularly reported to the top commanders of the Red Army the "compromising evidence" accumulated on their subordinates. The revealing "testimonies" of 40 or 140 informants, stored in a secret safe, were the same integral attribute of the lifestyle of the highest Stalinist nomenclature, like a black official car (the brand of which was strictly ranked depending on the position held), a state dacha with inventory numbers on tables and sofas, a clinic closed to mere mortals ...

Let us explain what has been said with one, but extremely striking example. On May 8, 1940, Stalin released Voroshilov from the post of People's Commissar of Defense. And he didn't just "release", but gave me to sign the multi-page "Act on the reception of the People's Commissariat of Defense of the USSR Comrade. Timoshenko from comrade. Voroshilov" (146, pp. 298–309). In this amazing document, two dozen areas of work of the defense department were listed, for each of which the state was stated, "exceptional neglect" and the substitution of the case with "paper reports". Moreover, this "indictment", which clearly indicates that Comrade Voroshilov destroyed the country's defense as thoroughly and comprehensively as he could not have destroyed it and the enemy agent who made his way to the Kremlin, signed (except for Voroshilov himself) the new People's Commissar of Defense Tymoshenko and two secretaries Central Committee - Zhdanov and Malenkov. And what? This "Act" testified to the fact that

that "the arrest of Voroshilov was already a foregone conclusion"? Yes, nothing like that - Voroshilov was then appointed to the highest post of head of the Defense Committee under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. Formally speaking, People's Commissar Tymoshenko was subordinate to him. On June 30, 1941, the "marshal pest" Voroshilov became a member of the State Defense Committee, that is, among those five people (Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Malenkov, Beria), in whose hands all power in the country was concentrated. It is noteworthy that neither the People's Commissar of Defense Tymoshenko, nor the then Chief of the General Staff Zhukov in this "five strongest" did not enter.

The arrest of Army General Meretskov was not an isolated occurrence in those crazy days. Starting from the second half of May 1941, an avalanche of arrests of the so-called aviators' case rolled along the highest echelon of the military leadership of the USSR, growing more and more in size. Within two months, without stopping for the war, were arrested:

- **three former** commanders of the Red Army Air Force (Loktionov, Smushkevich, Rychagov);
- Head of the Main Directorate of Air Defense of the USSR (Stern);
- Assistant Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force for Long-Range Aviation (Proskurov);
- Chief of Staff of the Red Army Air Force and his deputy (Volodin and Yusupov);
- Commander of the Air Force of the Far Eastern Front (Gusev);
- **Deputy Commander of the Air Force of the Leningrad Military District (Levin);**
- **Commander of the Air Force of the North-Western Front (Ionov);**
- **Commander of the Air Force of the Western Front (Tayursky);**
- **Commander of the Air Force and Chief of Staff of the Air Force of the South-Western Front (Ptukhin and Laskin);**
- **Commander of the Air Force of the Moscow Military District (Pumpur);**
- Assistant Commander of the Air Force of the Oryol Military District (Shakht);
- Assistant Commander of the Air Force of the Volga Military District (Alekseev);
- Head of the Military Academy of Command and Navigators of the Air Force (Arzhenukhin);
- Head of the Air Force Research Institute (Filin);
- Head of the Research Institute of Aviation Armaments (Shevchenko).

This list is, of course, far from complete. It includes only commanders of the highest rank. Simultaneously with the "case of aviators", the "case of gunners" was unfolding (albeit at a somewhat slower pace and scale), within the framework of which the people's commissar for armaments Vannikov, the people's commissar for ammunition Sergeev, his deputies Khodyakov, Inyashkin, Shibarov and Khrenkov, the deputy head of the GAU Savchenko, were arrested, his deputies, designers of artillery systems, dozens of other

commanders, engineers, managers... Meretskov's arrest took place simultaneously with the arrests of aviation commanders. That, however, cannot in itself serve as evidence of the relationship between these "cases". In any case, one - and at the same time very important - difference lies in the fact that Meretskov was released, and all the above-named defendants in the "Aviator Case" were shot. They were shot in several "passes", from October 16, 1941 to February 23, 1942, but everyone was shot. But Stalin pardoned Meretskov, which can probably be considered the

biggest oddity and mystery of the Meretskov case. Turning now from rumors, riddles and conjectures to documents, we find that today exactly two documents are known that are directly related to the story of the arrest and

release of Meretskov. Both of these documents were published by the Trud newspaper, No. 230 of December 14, 2001. It sounds somewhat strange and not at all "academic", but the reality is exactly that. The first "document" is a message from the leadership of the Central Archive of the FSB that the investigation file of K.A. Meretskov destroyed. That's right - not lost, not classified, but destroyed. The second document is a letter with which, on August 28, 1941, Meretskov himself turned to Stalin. This letter, which, according to sound logic, should have been destroyed along with the supposedly destroyed "Meretskov case", was not destroyed. The central archive of the FSB kindly provided (or could, we note, not provide it - the archive is departmental, it is not included in the system of the state archival service, decisions of the smallest clerks of this institution are not subject to appeal

"Labor" to Sergei Turchenko this document, which was published in the article "Letter from Lefortovo". Here is the full text of this letter:

*"To the Secretary of the Central Committee
of the CPSU (b) Stalin I.V. In a tense time for our country, when every citizen is required to devote himself completely to the defense of the Motherland, I, having some military practice, am isolated and cannot take part in the liberation of our Motherland from enemy invasions. Previously working in responsible positions, I always carried out your instructions conscientiously and with full effort.*

I ask you once again to entrust me, to let me go to the front and in any work that you find possible to give me, to prove my devotion to you and the Motherland. I have been preparing for a war

with the Germans for a long time, I want to fight them, I despise them for their brazen attack on our country, give me the opportunity to fight, I will take revenge on them to my last opportunity, I will not spare myself to the last drop of blood, I will fight until the enemy is completely destroyed. I will take all measures to be useful for you, for the army and for our great people.

28. VIII.41 K. Meretskoy. What meaningful information can be extracted from this text? Not a single word was explicitly said about the reasons for the arrest, about the charges brought against him. There are no words in this letter, so natural in such circumstances, about one's own innocence, about the falsity and groundlessness of the accusations.

And only in the last paragraph does a phrase appear that deserves close attention: *"I have been preparing for a war with the Germans for a long time, I want to fight with them, I despise them for their brazen attack on our country, give me the opportunity to fight ..."* Strange words. The third month there is a war, already called the Great Patriotic War. According to official data, two million people signed up for the people's militia from among those who have a legal exemption from conscription for mobilization. And at such and such a time, a professional military man with the rank of general of the army considers it necessary to prove, convince, assure Stalin that he "wants to fight the Germans", that he "despises" them.

Why did it happen? It remains to be assumed that someone (perhaps himself Stalin) had earlier questioned Meretskoy's desire to "fight the Germans".

The assumption is not so unbelievable. At least a real and documented case is known when Comrade Stalin asked such questions. It was August 1, 1938, during an armed conflict with the Japanese at the infamous Lake Khasan. Then Stalin, in a telephone conversation with the commander of the troops of the Far Eastern Front, Marshal Blucher, asked him the following question: *"Tell me, Comrade Blucher, honestly, do you have a desire to really fight the Japanese? If you don't have such a desire, say it directly, as a communist should..."* (146, p. 59) There is no doubt that Marshal Blucher answered such a question directly, correctly, "as a communist should." But this did not help to change the fate prepared for him ...

In addition to Meretskov's letter to Stalin, which was published relatively recently, there are also widely known, repeatedly republished memoirs of Marshal Meretskov (93). The mysterious story connected with the arrest and the happy deliverance from the inevitable, it would seem, execution, is bypassed in the memoirs by complete, absolute silence. At first sight. On closer reading, one can find a rather strange fragment in Meretskov's memoirs, possibly having the most direct relation both to the mystery of the arrest and to the main topic of our study. Since the style in this case is just as important as the content, the quote will inevitably be long: *"...Probably, millions of Soviet people still remember how they spent the evening before the*

unforgettable Sunday of June 22, 1941. I have not forgotten this evening either.

I was summoned to my immediate superior, the People's Commissar for Defense, who had been in a particularly tense state for the last few days. And although I understood the reason for his nervous state, although I saw with my own eyes what was happening on the western border, the words of the people's commissar entered my consciousness with unusual sharpness and anxiety. S.K. Timoshenko said then:

"Perhaps the war will start tomorrow!" You need to be as a representative of the High Command in the Leningrad Military District. You know his troops well and will be able to help the leadership of the district if necessary. The main thing is not to succumb to provocations.

What are my powers in the event of an armed attack? I asked. - Resilience

first. Be able to distinguish a real attack from local incidents and prevent them from escalating into a war. But be on alert. In the event of an attack, you yourself know what to do.

So, the old setting continues to operate. Preserve peace for the country as far as possible: for a year, for half a year, for a month. We'll harvest. We will build new defense enterprises. The next mechanized corps will be put into operation. We will establish the production of high-speed aircraft. Perhaps the international situation will improve. And even if it does not improve, if the war does start, but not now, but later, then it will be easier to enter into it. Buy time by all means! Another month, another half a month, another week. The war may start tomorrow. But we must try to use everything so that it does not start tomorrow. To do the maximum possible and even a fraction of the impossible..." (93, p. 210)

In the light of everything that is known today about the plans and actions of the top military-political leadership of the USSR, persistent, verbose arguments about "harvesting" and building "new defense enterprises" look like some kind of delirium. On the evening of June 21, 1941, the Kremlin clearly realized that only a few days or even hours remained before the start of the war. It was already too late to hope for "an improvement in the international situation". It will not be possible to build new enterprises, or to harvest the harvest that is just ripening in the fields before the start of hostilities. There could be no more doubt about it. According to military intelligence reports, the Germans were removing wire fences on the border, and the roar of engines of tanks going to the border hung in the air. To the east of the border, on the basis of the border military districts, the fronts were already deployed, the headquarters of which, on the orders of People's Commissar Timoshenko, were advanced to field command posts. The countdown went to hours and minutes, and the Deputy People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR Army General

Meretskov knew this very well. What kind of "harvests" are there ... Everything absurd becomes absolutely logical, if only we assume that it was **not about the war with Germany, but about the war with Finland**. That's v

an overwrought monologue becomes quite reasonable. Even if the war with Finland starts "a month, half a month, a week" later, this will already give a huge gain for the Red Army. Both Timoshenko and Meretskov on the evening of June 21 understood that Hitler was still able to get ahead of them. The Red Army will have to enter the war in an extremely difficult situation: mobilization has not yet been completed (although a lot has been done as part of covert mobilization), the operational deployment of troop groups in the western theater of operations is just beginning, dozens of divisions of the Second Strategic Echelon are in railway cars scattered on gigantic spaces from the Far East to Smolensk and Shepetovka. Another enemy (Finland) and another active front on the northern approaches to Leningrad is not the time at all.

Timoshenko, Meretskov, and Stalin himself did not expect a catastrophe of such a scale that actually happened. In Moscow, they hoped that even in such an unfavorable situation, the Red Army would only move back a little, and then be able to go on the counteroffensive. It's not a hypothesis, it's a fact. Directive No. 3, sent to the troops at 9 pm on June 22, signed by Timoshenko and Zhukov, set the task of occupying Lublin and Suwalki "by the end of June 24." Perhaps it was the usual "Soviet planning": if you want to get a brick machine, order two, one, maybe they will bring it. Even if not on June 24, but on July 4, Stalin hoped to transfer hostilities to enemy territory in the very near future. With such ideas about the possible development of the military-political situation, it

was extremely important to delay the start of the war with Finland for at least a couple of weeks. After the Red Army went on a decisive offensive in the West, the Finnish leadership would think ten times about whether it needed to "fasten" its country to the crumbling cart of the Third Reich. That is why on the evening of June 21, Meretskov could have been given the task of *"doing the maximum possible and even a fraction of the impossible"* so that the war with Finland *"does not start tomorrow."* On the following pages of Meretskov's memoirs, we find direct confirmation of the hypothesis that **in the possibility of delaying**

the beginning of the war with Finland, he believed and sought to realize this opportunity:

"... So far it has been calm on the Soviet-Finnish border. Apparently, Finland was waiting to make the most favorable decision for itself. But how long was she going to wait? A month, a week, a day?.. In this regard, I instructed a group of district headquarters officers to calculate what and how much the district may need in various situations: if Finland comes out immediately, comes out later, or does not come out at all (emphasis mine . - M.S.); if reinforcements are sent to us, if they do not send them, or we ourselves will have to help other districts, etc. In peacetime it is impossible to foresee all the combinations that may arise after the outbreak of war, especially when the war itself does not go as expected. In such cases, it is necessary to show maximum efficiency and rebuild plans in accordance with specific circumstances ... "On June 23, 1941, the installation for the maximum possible delay in the start of hostilities was actually

confirmed by the instructions received by the headquarters of the Northern Front and the Northern Fleet "do not fly over or cross the border, no hostilities against Finland until further notice not to be carried out.

Then came June 24th. Perhaps Meretskov, who was not familiar with the reports of the mysterious "reliable sources", had the imprudence to object. Maybe he just did not support the next wise decision of the omniscient "leader" not ardently enough. In an atmosphere of "spy mania" that had already reached the limits of mass insanity, this could be enough to raise the question: "Tell me honestly, Comrade Meretskov, as befits a communist - do you have a desire to really fight the Germans and their accomplices? If you don't have such a desire, say it directly ... "It was after that that everything that happened in reality happened.

Who, and most importantly, why, planted this obvious disinformation on Stalin? There is no answer to this question, and it is unlikely that a reliable answer to such questions will be found in the foreseeable future. Disinformation could be introduced through intelligence channels by the German secret services, who were extremely interested in

provoking a full-scale war between Finland and the USSR. The people who reported this misinformation to Stalin themselves might not have realized that the enemy was using them for his own purposes. The option of direct and deliberate betrayal is not excluded.

Suppose further that some time later, Stalin received exhaustive evidence that "reliable sources" had deceived him. This proof was the absence of at least single German air raids on Leningrad. No matter what and no matter how they reported to him about the "brilliant results" of the raid on the "German airfields in Finland", Stalin was not so naive and so ignorant of military affairs as to believe that the "Stalinist falcons" destroyed everything on earth in one fell swoop. 600 enemy aircraft. The absence of raids on Leningrad better than any undercover "sources" testified that there was no German aviation on Finnish airfields and never was. Moreover - and worse - by the end of the summer of 1941, Stalin received the most convincing evidence that Finland should not have been provoked into war. At the end of August 1941, the Finnish troops, without waiting for Stalin's "concessions", completely regained all the territories lost under the terms of the Moscow Peace Treaty of 1940, and in Ladoga Karelia they even moved much further east from the 1939 border.

Sometimes, however, very rarely, Stalin recalled his faithful servants, who were "slandered by scoundrels." Rarely, but it happened. This happened, for example, with the arrested on June 7, 1941, the People's Commissar for Armaments Vannikov.

As a return of gratitude, Comrade Vannikov later headed the Soviet "atomic project" and handed Comrade Stalin "ammunition" of immeasurable power. Well, at the beginning of September 1941, fate smiled at Meretskov as well.

Part 4

Collapse

Chapter

4.1 "The cars will go on a furious campaign ..."

If the air strike on Finland, which took place on June 25-26, 1941, was at least occasionally mentioned in the especially thick books of Soviet historians, then practically nothing was written about the offensive operations of the Red Army ground forces on Finnish territory. Nevertheless, such actions took place in July 1941. Or, more precisely, they started, but were interrupted "on the very takeoff." It is necessary to remember them, because in order to assess the real combat effectiveness of the Red Army of the 1941 model, they will be as indicative as the results of the "crushing strike on Finnish airfields."

The main strike force deployed on the Karelian Isthmus of the 23rd Army was the 10th Mechanized Corps (commander Major General I.G. Lazarev). Like all other mechanized corps of the Red Army, 10 MK included three divisions: two tank (21 TD and 24 TD) and one motorized (198 MD). The most combat-ready division of the corps was the 21st Tank Division, formed on the basis of the 40th Red Banner Tank Brigade - a veteran of the "winter war" battles. The weak link of the 10th MK was the 24th Panzer Division, which was formed on the basis of the 11th Reserve Tank Regiment and received heavily worn materiel from it: 133 BT-2 and 94 BT-5, a total of 227 tanks produced in 1932/1934 years. As for the 198th motorized division, it had only a few dozen serviceable tanks (with the regular strength of the tank regiment of a motorized division of 258 units) and, in fact, was an ordinary rifle division, however, with an unusually large number of vehicles.

As noted above, the pre-war operational plans of the western military districts (including the Leningrad Military District) have not been published, so one can only guess about the specific tasks assigned to the 23rd Army of the Northern Front. Nevertheless, given the concentration of the main reserves of the 23rd Army (10th mechanized corps, 70th rifle division) behind the 5 ° CK front and the inclusion of three RGK artillery regiments (101st, 108th, 519- j) out of four,

it can be assumed that according to the plans of the Soviet command, the main events of the "active defense" were to take place in the strip between the coast of the Gulf of Finland and the

Vuoksi River. The same intentions were attributed to the enemy. In the combat journal (ZhBD) of the 23rd Army we read (entry dated June 23): *"The enemy continues to intensively concentrate troops to the state border, mainly in the direction of Lappeenranta - Vyborg and Hamina (a village on the coast of the Gulf of Finland, 30 km from the border. - M.S.) - Vyborg, as well as in the areas of Lake. Puraujärvi and Yakola (that is, between Imatra and Enso. - M.S.), pulling up the motorized parts "* (347).

Later we will see that such an assessment of the situation and the enemy grouping turned out to be deeply erroneous. On

the eve of the war, the divisions of the 10th mechanized corps were deployed in the southern suburbs of Leningrad (Pushkin, Pavlovsk, Gatchina), and in order to advance to the deployment area behind the 5 ° CK front (in the "Vyborg-Heinioki-Kyamarya triangle), tank divisions had to pass 170–180 km. This task proved to be very difficult for them. Even in the better prepared and better equipped 21st Panzer Division, the march lasted two days, and the tanks used up 14-15 engine hours, which clearly indicates that a significant part of the "march" consisted of standing in traffic jams and traffic jams. In one of the two tank regiments of the division (42 tank regiments), by 13:00 on June 24, 75 tanks out of 91 (348) entered the concentration area. 16 tanks remained on the route due to various technical malfunctions.

The 24th Panzer Division literally crumbled during the march. 49 tanks (22 "BT-2" and 27 "BT-5") turned out to be out of order and were left at the place of permanent deployment of the division. At 15:00 on June 23, 178 tanks set out on a campaign, of which by the end of the day on June 26 only 92 tanks had crawled to the specified deployment area, and only 62 of them were considered combat-ready. *"Their current repairs are hampered by the lack of tools and spare parts"* (349). Yes, there have always been big problems with tools and spare parts in this division. And not only with the tool: *"... Both cold*

machine parks required a major overhaul of the ceiling and the installation of new doors. Cars that did not have enough space in the parks stood in the open air, and it was impossible to cover them due to the lack of a tarpaulin ... In stationary

mechanical equipment workshops had two worn-out lathes and one drilling machine ... Combat and auxiliary vehicles, with the exception of 17 BA-10 armored vehicles received from the Izhora plant, were not equipped with a transportable individual set of spare parts, tools and accessories. For the repair of combat and auxiliary vehicles, there was a lack of sash cranks, track tracks, side clutches, starters, batteries, axle shafts, intermediate exhaust pipes, exhaust manifolds and gaskets for them, springs and shock absorbers ... "(312) We have given such an extensive quote from the monograph , dedicated to a short history of the 24th Panzer Division, mainly

considering the publication date of this book - 2006. A fairly young author reproduced in the best possible way and even multiplied the traditions of the "lament of Yaroslavna", formed in classical Soviet historiography. Judging by the long list of missing pipes, gaskets, doors and tarpaulins, the war was a stunning surprise for this military unit, just as the sowing and harvesting seasons hit the collective farm MTS with their unexpected arrival every year. But there is one big difference: the MTS was sometimes located in the remote Siberian taiga, a hundred kilometers from the nearest railway station, and the 24th Panzer Division suffered from a lack of wrenches and screwdrivers 20 km from Leningrad, the largest center of the USSR military industry. And there were not a thousand and one tank divisions in the Leningrad Military District, but only four ... The Military Council of the Northern Front finally turned its attention to the amazing "order in tank units" on June 28, 1941. On this day, the Front Armed Forces issued order No. 143532, specially dedicated to the

march of the 24th Panzer Division: *"The march of the 24th Panzer Division to the assembly area was poorly organized. The division arrived in the area unprepared for a combat mission. Most of the combat vehicles were left along the way.*

Only on the Pargolovo-Kivennapa section on June 25, 1941, at 18:00, 39 vehicles of the division were out of order or without fuel ... The vehicles were left on the road without technical assistance, and the crews were left to their own devices.

The commanders of divisions and regiments did not take timely measures to search for and provide technical assistance to lagging vehicles. Also, care was not shown for the personnel of these vehicles, who were left without food and ate accidentally (exclusively bread) from passing military units ... ”(350) It is worth

paying attention to the phrase about “lack of fuel”. Wheeled-tracked tanks "BT" had a cruising range of more than 200 km on tracks and more than 400 km on wheels. From Pavlovsk to Vyborg, they could reach without a single refueling on the march ... Fortunately, all this happened on their own territory, without any influence from the air or ground enemy. In the end, the lagging vehicles were filled with gasoline, burned-out pipes and gaskets were changed for them, and on June 28, 49 relatively new BT-5 tanks (351) entered the division. As a result, by June 28, 1941, there were already 177 tanks, 33 armored vehicles, 324 vehicles of all types and purposes, 15 radio stations (not counting tank ones), as well as 6895 personnel (312) in the area of concentration of the 24th Panzer Division. The tanks of the 10th

mechanized corps did not have to stand in the concentration area for a long time. As soon as the 10th MK was within the “reach zone” of the command of the 23rd Army, then all the regulations, all the instructions, the whole pre-war theory about the massive use of tanks as part of **large** mechanized formations, all the lessons of the German “blitzkrieg” in the West, studied many times in staff exercises , - everything was immediately rejected and forgotten.

Ten armored vehicles "BA-10" "to protect the headquarters of the army", five tanks "to operate together with the 115th rifle division", a tank battalion of 24 vehicles "at the disposal of the commander of the 43rd rifle division", a tank company of 10 vehicles “at the disposal of the commander of the 19th rifle corps”, a tank battalion of 2 companies (20 BT tanks) “to reinforce the 123rd rifle division”, five tank platoons of three-machine composition from each division “for anti-tank defense in the band of rifle corps” , anti-aircraft battery of the 24th Panzer Division "to cover the headquarters of the 23rd Army" ...

Strange work was carried out in the zone of the 123rd Infantry Division by the forces of the pontoon-bridge battalion of the 24th Tank

divisions. 123rd Rifle Division was on the left flank of the 23rd Army. The small forest river Tervajoki flows in the defense zone of this division. This is not a big obstacle in the way of the enemy, who (as expected at the headquarters of the 23rd Army) will attack, and even with tanks, from the direction of Hamina - Vyborg, but military sappers know many ways in which a natural river barrier can be strengthened. Paragraph 409 of the Field Manual PU-39 gives the following instructions: *"The defensive properties of the river line can be strengthened, in addition to artificially raising the water level (waterlogging), by a system of artificial barriers (increasing the steepness of the banks, setting mines and wire obstacles in the water, etc.) "*. However, the sappers of the 24th Panzer Division were not engaged in increasing the "steepness of the coast", but in building a bridge across the Tervajoki (312). For what? Nothing is said about this in the documents known to the author.

Be that as it may, but by the end of June 1941, units and formations of the 10th mechanized corps deployed in the areas indicated by them, put military equipment in order after a multi-day march; command staff conducted a detailed reconnaissance of the area. Now it was time to act. On the night of July 1-2, several events took place in different directions and

several different combat orders were issued, which are rather difficult to link into a single picture.

In the "Journal of Combat Operations" of the 21st Panzer Division (318) we read:

"... at 24:00 on 01.07.41 , the commander of the 10th MK, Major General Comrade, arrived at the command post of the stadiva (command post of the division headquarters) . Lazarev and set the task: to separate from the division RO (reconnaissance detachment) as part of a tank company, a motorized rifle company, a platoon of flamethrower tanks. The task of the RO is to cross the border in the ENSO area and further, acting in the direction of ENSO - IMATRA, to conduct combat reconnaissance in the YAKOLA area (a village on the road between Enso and Imatra. - M.S.), IMATRA, st. TAINIOKOSKI and establish the forces, composition and grouping of the enemy.

At 1:40 2.7 a task was set and a combat order was received for the head of the RO, the commander of the 21st RB (reconnaissance battalion of the 21st tank division) Captain Comrade Zhidkov ... The task was ordered by the division: at 6:00 2.7, cross the border in the ENSO area and conduct combat reconnaissance in area YAKOLA, IMATRA,

*Art. TAINIOKOSKI and establish the forces, composition and grouping of the enemy. By capturing control prisoners, establish the numbering of enemy units, after mastering Art. IMATRA - blow up the station and set fire to the forest with flamethrower tanks. In case of successful action and capture of the lines: JAKOLA, IMATRA, art. TAINIONSKEI - **hold them until our infantry approaches** (emphasized by me. - M.S.). Reconnaissance in combat is carried out with one single*

purpose - to prepare for the subsequent offensive. In this case, this military axiom is additionally confirmed by the order to hold the captured lines *"until the approach of our infantry."* It is very important to emphasize that the decision to conduct reconnaissance in force in the direction of Imatra was not at all a manifestation of a private initiative of the command of the 21st Panzer Division. The task was set by the corps commander, who personally arrived at the command post of the division at midnight. Moreover, the commander of the 10th MK did not act on his own initiative. In the ZhBD of the 23rd Army, in the description of the events of July 2, 1941, the following entry is found: *"Combat reconnaissance organized **by the personal order of the commander** (emphasized by me. - M.S.) in the direction of Imatra as part of the tank group 10 MK and two motorized rifle battalions regiment, crossed the border in the afternoon"* (317). The noticeable discrepancy between the composition of the reconnaissance group ("motorized rifle company" in one

document and "two battalions" in another) is immediately explained in the following fragment from the railroad regiment of the 21st Panzer Division:

*"...According to the instructions of the commander of the 10th MK [received] from the Commander-23, **the infantry of the 115th SD should be included in the composition of the RO, up to a battalion** (emphasized by me. - M.S.). Artillery of 115 SD [ordered] to support the actions of the RO by 4 divisions. All work on the organization of these issues dragged on until 10:00 2.7, and the infantry battalion of the 115th SD was never included in the RO. At 10:30 2.7. The RO crossed the state border along the highway from ENSO in the direction of IMATRA with its old composition, with the support of artillery of 115 SD ... "* (318)

The planned (although not implemented in practice) inclusion of the 115th rifle battalion in the reconnaissance detachment, as well as the planned and implemented participation of the 115th rifle division artillery, is another confirmation that reconnaissance in combat in

in the direction of Imatra was organized at least at the command level of the 23rd army: the 115th rifle division was part of the 19th SC and the commander of the 10th MK (especially the commander of the 21st TD) did not obey in any way.

In the very hours when preparations for reconnaissance in force began on the Soviet side of the border, in the sector of the 2nd Finnish Infantry Division, in the strip from st. Parikkala to Ristalahti, a similar operation began. The general offensive of the Finnish "Karelian Army" on the Onega-Ladoga Isthmus began only on July 10, 1941. But a few days before the start of full-scale hostilities, the Finnish command decided, apparently, to conduct reconnaissance in battle in the direction of Lahdenpohya. In the future, it was there, at the junction of the 23rd and 7th Soviet armies, that the Finns tried several times to reach the shore of Lake Ladoga, cut the Hiitola-Lahdenpohya-Sortavala railway line and break the supply lines of the 7th Army. Thus, the direction of reconnaissance in combat, undertaken by the Finns in the first days of July, was quite expedient. In the sources known to the author, unfortunately, no data was found on what forces this reconnaissance in force was carried out. Strictly

speaking, the fighting on July 1-7 in the Esko-Meriya-Ristalahti region is not mentioned at all in any survey work on the history of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War. All authors (both Soviet and Western) unanimously and without agreement begin the description of the events of the war on July 10, 1941. Most likely, reconnaissance in battle was carried out only by part of the forces of the 2nd Infantry Division. In the documents of the headquarters of the Red Army, there are a variety of estimates of the size of the enemy:

*“On July 1, 41, the enemy, with a force of **up to 2 infantry brigades** (6th and 7th), went on the offensive, directing the main attack on Meria in the 461 joint venture section (right-flank regiment of the 142nd rifle division). By the end of the day, Esco occupied... During day 2.7, the enemy continued the offensive with **at least 4 infantry regiments** (which roughly corresponds to two brigades. - M.S.) . By the end of the day, Meria took possession. The enemy's attacks on Ristalahti were not successful...”* (319) This is an entry in the ZhBD of the 23rd Army. In the Combat Order of the headquarters of the 24th TD No. 5 dated 05:50 on July 2, we read: *“The enemy, with a force **of up to two infantry divisions**, during the day and night of July 1, pressed our advanced units on the Ristalahti-Parikalla front .*

The 24th Panzer Division was on the opposite (left) flank of the front of the 23rd Army and information about the enemy grouping operating in the Esco-Ristalahti area could only be obtained from higher headquarters (although in this case it is not clear how the two brigades turned into two divisions). In contrast, the 198th motorized division of the 10th mechanized corps was (as will be shown below) transferred to the Elisenvaara region and took a direct part in the battles at Esko-Meria. In the documents of the headquarters of 198 MD, the established number of the enemy is steadily declining:

- Combat order No. 08 (23:00 3.7) *"The enemy pushed 461 joint ventures **up to two infantry brigades** and took possession of one battalion area, suffering*

huge losses ..." - Operational summary No. 7 (08:00 5.7) enemy **infantry brigade ... "**

- Opersvodka No. 8 (24:00 5.7) *" **Up to 3 battalions of Finns, presumably the 7th Infantry Brigade, are defending in front of the front of the division ..."** An*

interesting assessment of the number and plans of the enemy is found in the latest (2006) work of a Russian historian: *"... June, the first manifestations of activity of the Finnish army on the Karelian Isthmus were noted, and on the night of July 1, up to two infantry battalions with tanks wedged into our defensive formations at the junction of the 19th and 50th rifle corps in the Lahdenpohja region, with the task of breaking through to the western coast of Lake Ladoga, isolate the 7th and 23rd armies from each other and subsequently destroy them piecemeal ... "* (312) The problem is not even

that the "junction of the 19th and 50th rifle corps" "Lahdenpokhya region" – this can be considered an unfortunate reservation – but in an amazing assessment of the combat potential of the "hot Finnish guys", who, with the help of two infantry battalions, were going to "destroy in parts" two Soviet armies! All this would be funny if in July 1941 the command of the 23rd Army did not assess what was happening in almost the same way. A local sortie of the Finns on the right flank of the army caused a great commotion at its headquarters.

In the ZhBD of the 23rd Army we read: *"To eliminate the breakthrough and restore the situation in the 461st section of the joint venture, the commander decided to use 10 MKs ..."* This decision was fully consistent

all pre-war plans and charters - the mechanized corps in defense was supposed to be used to deliver a devastating blow to the enemy who had broken through into the depths of the army's battle order. Usually this was formulated as follows: "Surround, destroy and prevent a retreat back to enemy territory with a blow to the flank and rear." However, the command of the 23rd Army decided to "use 10 MK" in its previous way - continuing to "disassemble" the mechanized corps according to

parts.

The 198th motorized division was completely withdrawn from the subordination of the command of the mechanized corps and received an order *"by the end of 2.7, concentrate along the railway in the Antol-Sayral area in readiness for actions in the direction of 142nd and 115th rifle divisions."* Moreover, this decision was made at night, in extreme fever and haste, "over the head" of the commander of the 10th MK. The commander of the 198th MD only had to inform his immediate superior: *"Based on the instructions of the chief of staff of the 23rd Army, the division passes under his control and from 8:00 2.7 moves forward to the Sayrala-Elisenvaara region"* (Combat Report No. 02 dated 4:30 2 July).

Then, on the night of July 2-3, it was the turn to "dismantle" the main strike force of the 10th mechanized corps, the 21st tank division. In the railway division of the division, this is described as follows:

"At 23:30 2.7, the head of the ABTU Shtarm 23 (head of the auto-armored department of the 23rd Army), Major General Lavrinovich, arrived at the headquarters and, on behalf of the Commander, set the following task for the division: one TP consisting of 50 linear tanks and 16 flamethrower tanks with 2 ammunition, 2 gas stations and 2 daily food rations, load at st. KHINIL and direct railway. to the ELISENVAARA area at the disposal of the commander of 198 md. Finish loading by 24:00 2.7 / time is clearly unrealistic / ... Such a task was completely unrealistic in terms of time, however, 41 TPs consisting of 41 tanks with 2 tanks and 2 refueling by 1:00 3.7 were loaded onto 50 platforms and at 1:15 The 3.7 echelon set off for ELISANVAAR..." So, taking into account the tank platoons and tank companies previously transferred to the rifle units

of the 23rd Army, the 21st Tank Division "lost" already 95 tanks and 10 BA-10 heavy cannon armored vehicles. At the same time, the task of capturing the Imatra station was not removed at all! On the same night from July 2 to July 3, General-

Major Lavrinovich ordered: *"To concentrate the rest of the division on its own by 4:00 3.7 in the ENSO area and from 6:00 3.7 to launch an attack on IMATRA with the task of capturing IMATRA and the isthmuses between the lakes IMALAN-JARVI, SAIM, holding the latter until the infantry units approach »* (318). As for the third division of the 10th

mechanized corps, the 24th tank division, it was practically inactive. On the morning (at 5:50) on July 2, the division received an order *to "concentrate by 8:00 in the area of st. Tali."* With some delay (judging by the Combat Report of the headquarters of division No. 6 - by 13:00 on July 2), the 24th TD went to the area of the Tali railway station, i.e., it moved about 10-15 km from the previous place of concentration, as before being outside the combat zone (321). As a result, the main task of the 10th mechanized corps - the capture of the Imatra railway station and the narrow isthmus adjacent to it between the state border and the Saimaa lake system - had to be solved by the forces of the 21st tank division alone, and this division, having not yet fired a single shot at enemy, "lost" almost half of its tanks. On the other hand, for the sake of objectivity, it must be admitted that the 21st Panzer was not required to repeat the "Suvorov crossing the Alps": from the border Enso to Imatra there were only 8 (eight) km, and the forces of the parties on the front of the upcoming offensive (12th and the 18th Finnish infantry divisions, on the one hand, the 43rd and 115th rifle divisions of the Red Army, on the other) were approximately equal.

As noted above, the first attempt to capture Art. Imatra took place on the morning of July 2. A reconnaissance detachment consisting of a tank company (10 T-26 tanks) from the reconnaissance battalion of the division, one platoon of flame-throwing tanks (3 tanks "OT-26") from the 42 tp and one motorized rifle company from 21 motorized rifle regiments at 2:20 crossed over bridge north of st. Antrea across the Vuoksi River, concentrated in the Enso area at 7:30 and crossed the border at 10:30. The description of further events in different documents does not quite match. In the ZhBD of the 21st Panzer

Division we read: *"The results of combat reconnaissance. RO with a fight advanced into the depths of Finnish territory by 3-4 km and reached the northern slopes of heights. 107, 5, south of IMATRA. Throughout this stretch, the enemy offered almost no resistance.*

At the height 107, 5 the enemy met the RO with fire, 1 tank was hit by a heavy machine gun and Lieutenant Litvin was killed, the turret gunner was wounded. A captured Finnish soldier was captured, valuable documents were taken from a killed German officer (???) . Observation of RO found that high. 107, 5 is well defended by the enemy, there are field facilities / obviously, bunkers/.

*CONCLUSION: RO did not fully fulfill its task, did not reach IMATRA, did not set fire to the enemy's forest, only established that **this area was defended by insignificant enemy forces** (emphasis added by me. - M.S.)". Compiled immediately after the battle (23:00 on July 2),*

the operational summary of the headquarters of 21 TD contains the following information: *"Losses of the reconnaissance group: 2 killed, 7 wounded. There are no material losses. One captured Finn was captured"* (323).

The operational report of the headquarters of the 42nd TP (without a number, dated 21:00 on July 2) refutes the overly self-critical entry in the division's railroad records. It turns out that the platoon of flamethrower tanks of the regiment managed to set fire to

a lot of things: *"The platoon, together with the reconnaissance group, reached Yakol, set fire to the village and, moving back along the route to the state border, set fire to the forest"* (324). In

any case, with or without a burned village, the task the capture of the Imatra station on July 2 was not resolved.

The next attempt, involving much larger forces, took place on 3 July. In accordance with the order of the

commander of the 21st Panzer Division, Colonel L.V. Bunin, three shock groups were formed. The first (one tank and one motorized rifle battalion) was supposed to *"go to the northeastern outskirts of Imatra and cut off the enemy's retreat to the north."* The second (two tank companies and a motorized rifle battalion) were to advance along the railway directly to Yakola - Imatra. The third group (10 tanks and one motorized rifle company) was to advance along the western bank of the Vuoksi River with the task of *"cutting off the enemy's retreat to the west, while simultaneously ensuring the division's operations from the west."* In the reserve of the division commander, in the area of the state border near Enso, there were one more tank and one motorized rifle battalion. Neighbor on the right

115th Rifle Division - was supposed to support the offensive of the tank division with the fire of four artillery battalions (318).

Further events of the day on July 3 are described in the ZhBD of the 21st Panzer Division and in the Combat Report of the Headquarters of the 10th MK dated 17:10 on July 4 as follows (318, 325):

"By 12:00, the units took their starting position for the offensive. Artillery was delayed in preparation and started it only at 13:00, having fired 50-55 shells in an hour." Here, apparently, a little military arithmetic reference is needed. The most widespread type of armament of an artillery regiment of a rifle division is a 122-mm howitzer. The combat rate of fire of this weapon indicated in all reference books is 5-6 rounds per

minute. In addition, there is such a clearly regulated standard as "Ammunition consumption for a day of intense combat." For a 122-mm howitzer, this consumption was determined by pre-war standards at 88 shots (326, p. 167). Two artillery battalions (24 howitzers) could

and should have thrown 2,000 shells on the enemy's head within half an hour. 55 shells in an hour is a slow "disturbing fire" (there is such a term in artillery) of a single gun. Such a "fire tornado" could only warn the Finns about the start of the offensive...

"At 14:00 on 03:00, the motorized rifle regiment and tanks crossed the state border and launched an offensive. With the crossing of the state border, the enemy at first offered weak resistance, and our units quickly moved forward. By 18:00, advanced companies reached the line of the northern slopes of high. 107, 5 - Yakola (i.e., within 4 hours they "quickly advanced" 4-5 km; people can crawl at such a speed, but tanks cannot move at such a speed in principle - in the T-26 gearbox there was no special demultiplier for movement at ultra-low speed), where they were met by organized enemy fire and retreated somewhat back. By 22:00, the situation had stabilized at the turn: the forest path southeast of the height. 107, 5, two houses sowing. YAKOLA, h. 39, 5. The 4th company of the 2nd battalion of the motorized rifle regiment (this is the group that, moving along the western bank of the Vuoksi, was

supposed to "cut off the enemy's retreat to the west") *met a strong*

enemy resistance, which went over to the attack, and by 22:00 the company with a fight retreated beyond the state border, losing three tanks burned out and one knocked

out. At 19:00 (this is the time indicated in the Combat Report of the Headquarters of the 10th MK dated 17:00 4.7), the division commander decided to withdraw from the battle. (The previous combat report of the headquarters of the 10th MK (dated 22:00 3.7) states that the decision to suspend the offensive was made by the commander of the 10th MK Lazarev, who was at the command post of the division near

the northern outskirts of ENSO) (327). At 2:25 on July 4, Colonel Zaev, Chief of Staff of the 10th MK, arrived at the command post of the stadium with the order of Commander-23, which instructed the division to withdraw from the battle and concentrate in the YASKI

area (a village 15 km southeast of the border). At 2:30, the enemy, having secretly bypassed the flanks of our units, launched a counteroffensive throughout the entire sector of the division. The counter-offensive began with strong machine-gun fire supported by mortars and artillery. In such an environment, the division commander boldly (as in the text of the ZhBD) decides to withdraw from the battle.

By 04:00, units withdrew from the battle in an organized manner. The enemy went on the attack three times, but was always defeated and driven back with heavy losses. All attempts by the enemy to encircle our units (i.e., surround two tank battalions with infantry) did not succeed.
had.

By 11:00 on July 4, the division concentrated in the Jaska area. The dead and wounded were taken out. According to preliminary estimates, there are 127 wounded, including 11 officers. The number of those killed is being specified. The wrecked tanks were evacuated from the battlefield, except for three that burned down from enemy fire. As a result of the battle, at least 150 White Finns were killed and more than a hundred people were wounded.

The number of those killed was clarified the next day. In the operational report of the headquarters of the 10th MK (No. 22 of 02:00 on July 5) the following figures are given

(328): - the tank regiment lost 8 people killed, 4 wounded, 1 missing; - in the

motorized rifle regiment 45 killed, 90 wounded, 10 missing
lead.

In addition, *"destroyed by enemy artillery and mortars"* 10 light machine guns and 35 rifles (318). On July

4, 1941, the 24th Panzer Division of the 10th Mechanized Corps took part in the battles with the "White Finns" for the first, only and last time. But not the whole division, and not even one of its regiments, but **two platoons** from the tank battalion, transferred on June 30 to reinforce the 123rd rifle division. 6 BT tanks under the command of Lieutenant Radchenko, together with the 1st battalion of the 255th rifle regiment, conducted reconnaissance in combat in Finland, near the village of Vilmaa. *"The battle lasted for 2 hours, as a result of the battle, an anti-tank gun and two enemy machine guns were destroyed. Own losses: 2 tanks were hit, of which one required medium repairs, the other was restored by the crew, the driver was wounded in the personnel "* (312).

For what purpose this reconnaissance in force was carried out and whether it was somehow connected with building bridges on the forest river Tervajoki, it will no longer be possible to find out from the documents of the division headquarters and the 10th mechanized corps. While the formations of the 10th MK were carrying out all these strange maneuvers, at a time when they were desperately trying to pass 170 km through their own territory, at a time when two regiments of the 21st Panzer Division, under the personal leadership of the corps commander, clumsily poked into defense of "insignificant enemy forces" at the turn of the "forest path and two houses" near the obscure village of Yakola, at a time when an absurd paramilitary farce was being played out on the Karelian Isthmus, an unprecedented military disaster was unfolding on the distant - yet "distant" - approaches to Leningrad .

During the first 10 days of the war, the troops of the North-Western Front (Baltic OVO) were utterly defeated. German troops occupied all of Lithuania, most of Latvia, crossed the Daugava (Western Dvina) on the front from Riga to Daugavpils and, almost without meeting organized resistance, advanced to Ostrov and Pskov. As for the headquarters of the front, on June 27 it "relocated" to Rezekne, on June 30 to Pskov and on July 5 to Novgorod. The pace of the disorderly retreat of the troops of the North-Western Front in the early days was so high that the German command took

occurring as a pre-planned departure. On June 23, 1941, the Chief of Staff of the German Ground Forces F. Halder writes in his famous "War Diary": "... it seems that there is no

need to talk about organized withdrawal. The exception is, perhaps, the area in front of the front of Army Group North, where, apparently, a withdrawal beyond the Western Dvina River was indeed planned and prepared in advance. The reasons for such preparation cannot yet be established..." (331)

The six so-called national divisions that were part of the front (created on the basis of the formations of the former armies of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 179 sd, 180 sd, 181 sd, 182 sd, 183 sd, 184 sd) either fled, killing their command staff, or were hastily and with great "losses" due to mass desertion withdrawn into the depths of Russia. In Lithuania and Latvia, in fact, armed uprisings of local nationalists began, which proclaimed the creation of "Provisional Governments" (June 23 in Kaunas and June 28 in Riga) (332). On June 26, 1941, in the Daugavpils region, the head of the Operational Directorate of the S-Z.f. Headquarters surrendered. Major General Trukhin (later Trukhin actively collaborated with the Germans, headed the headquarters of the Vlasov "army" and ended his life on the gallows on August 1, 1946). Chief of Staff of the Front, Lieutenant General P.S. Klenov was arrested at the beginning of July 1941 and shot in October 1941. On July 3–

4, 1941, the head of the operational department of the General Staff of the Red Army, Lieutenant General N.F. Vatutin, sent to the North-Western Front as a plenipotentiary representative of the Headquarters and acting chief of staff of the front, reported to Zhukov a complete list of units and formations of the front that he could find. From the multi-page reports, a picture of an unprecedented defeat emerges: "... in the 11th Army

(16th rifle corps, 29th rifle corps, 179th and 184th rifle divisions, 5, 33, 128, 188, 126, 23- I am rifle divisions, 84th motorized division, 2nd tank division, 5th tank division, 10th artillery brigade, 429th howitzer artillery regiment, 4th and 30th pontoon regiments) - no information ...

... the state of the units of the 8th Army is characterized by the following data: 10th Infantry Division: The 98th Infantry Regiment is almost

completely destroyed; from the 204th Infantry Regiment, 30 people remained without materiel; The 30th Artillery Regiment has one gun; The 140th howitzer artillery regiment of 36 guns lost 21. The units and command and control of the 90th rifle division have not yet been found. Data on the state of the rest of the army has not been received..." (333, pp. 111, 120)

According to a statistical collection compiled by modern Russian military historians, the troops of the Northwestern Front (taking into account the new formations that entered the front) from June 22 to July 9, 1941 lost 2523 tanks **and 3560 guns and mortars, 341 thousand small arms** (9, p. 368). There was practically nothing to fight. On July 5, 1941, signed by Vatutin, the "Instruction for Combating Enemy Tanks" was issued, which ordered *"to prepare mud-clay, which is thrown into the viewing slots of the tank"* (333, p. 142). Throwing mud and clay was the task of the troops of the district, which just two weeks ago had 3,319 field guns (of all calibers) and 582 anti-aircraft guns (326, p. 253).

However, the High Command of the Red Army no longer harbored any illusions that the scattered remnants of the practically uncontrollable North-Western Front would be able to hold back the advance of the German troops. The headquarters of the Civil Code, in an effort to somehow slow down the advance of the enemy on the natural defensive lines of the Western Dvina and Velikaya rivers, feverishly threw more and more formations into battle. On June 25, for a counterattack on Manstein's tank corps, which had broken through to Daugavpils, the understaffed 21st mechanized corps of the Moscow Military District was involved (the planned completion date for the formation of this corps was set for 1942) and even the 5th airborne (!) Corps, which did not have for the fight against tanks, neither the appropriate weapons, nor proper training.

Then came the turn of the units and formations of the Northern Front and the aviation of the Baltic Fleet. On June 30, all three bomber regiments of the KBF Air Force (1 MTAP, 57 BAP, 73 BAP) received an order to bomb bridges and crossings on the Daugava in the area of Jekabpils and Daugavpils. If the enemy by that time had already managed to relocate his fighter air groups to former Soviet airfields in

In the Baltic States (according to the legend generally accepted in Russian historiography, these airfields were already destroyed, bombed, burned and rendered completely unusable), the fighter regiments of the Air Force of the Northern Front and the Air Force of the Baltic Fleet remained in their former locations, mainly at the Leningrad airfield hub. As for the fighter aircraft of the S-Z.f. (more than 400 crews and 500 serviceable aircraft, including 139 of the latest MiG-3s as of June 22, 1941), then by June 30 it no longer existed as an organized and combat-ready unit (269).

As a result, the airstrike on crossings on the Daugava on June 30, 1941 was organized in the same way as the attack on Finnish targets on June 25: without fighter cover and in small groups (from 5 to 9 bombers). As a result, not a single bridge was even damaged, and out of 99 bombers that took part in the operation, only 60 returned to their airfields. 34 aircraft were shot down by German fighters, 5 made emergency landings. 77 aircrew members were killed or missing (271).

On the evening of July 2 (from 21:30 to 22:00), the 2nd Air Division of the Air Force of the Northern Front tried to inflict a massive attack on German motorized mechanized columns in the Daugavpils - Kraslava - Rezekne area. Bombers of the 44th BAP carried out 38 sorties, the 58th BAP made 20 sorties. In Operational Report No. 019 of Headquarters 2 SAD and Operational Report No. 15 of Headquarters 44 BAP, this raid is

described as follows: “ ... 14 SB aircraft of 58 BAP were dropped from a height of 200 m on mechanized columns 73 FAB-100 and 12 ZAB-50 ”... 21 aircraft of the 44th BAP bombed columns of tanks and vehicles, the results of the bombing were excellent, gaps were observed in the thick of the accumulation of tanks ... 16 crews returned to their airfields with bombs without completing their tasks due to bad weather conditions and not finding targets; 2 crews dropped bombs on timing due to clouds; 2 crews did not return from the mission - they fell behind in the target area due to bad weather conditions; crew st. lieutenant M. dropped bombs in the Pskov region (?), two planes were shot down by their

anti-aircraft artillery near Pskov ... ” (334, 335) On July 4, from 9:50 to 22:00, 41 BAD bombers made 42 sorties in the Daugavpils-Rezekne area .

Losses - 20 aircraft. 20 out of 42. On July 6, in the period from 17:00 to 23:00, *"44 flights were made in the Dvina direction. 20 aircraft did not return to the base ..."* (336) Manstein, whose

56th tank corps was the first to cross the Western Dvina, writes in his memoirs: *"These days, Soviet aviation made every effort to destroy the bridges that fell into our hands with air raids. With amazing tenacity, at low altitude, one squadron flew after another with the only result - they were shot down."*

In the final "Report on the combat operations of the 2nd AD for two months of the war", signed by the division commander, Colonel Arkhangelsky, we read:

"...2. Actions in the first month of the war in small groups and single planes (there was a direct directive "do not go more than a link") was erroneous and made it possible to destroy us piece by piece. Large targets in the form of large motorized mechanized columns followed almost the parade formation (Dvinsk, Ostrov) and required massive air action. And for this there were both forces and means. It is characteristic to note

that everything that we were taught at the academy and during field exercises (and they taught us not always badly) was trampled underfoot from the first days of the war and replaced by sheer improvisation" (337)

There was indeed a direct directive. And the highest level. On July 4, 1941, signed by Zhukov, the Directive of the Headquarters of the Civil Code (b / n) was issued as follows:

"The Headquarters

ordered: 1. Departure for bombing objects and troops in large groups categorically prohibit. 2. From

now on, sorties for bombing on one target at the same time produce no more than a link, in the extreme case, a squadron " (338, p. 48). For hundreds of bomber

crews, these few lines were a death sentence. After the fighter regiments deployed in the first echelon of the fronts were crushed and crushed by a wave of "relocation", the organization of escort of bombers by fighters was reduced to a minimum.

panic Chaos and the collapse of the Air Force control system, and indeed the entire Red

The armies as a whole reduced this minimum to zero. If in such a situation the pilots had any chance to complete the combat mission and survive at the same time, then this chance was only in massing forces, in building dense battle formations of large groups of bombers, which, at least in theory, could meet the attacking Messerschmitts with a wall powerful machine gun fire. The Directive of the Headquarters did not leave the link (3 aircraft) of the SB or DB with practically no hope of returning home after meeting with enemy fighters ... For the sake of truth, it must be admitted that the aviation of that era -

even with its most ideal use - was not able to independently solve the problem of destroying tank columns enemy. Fire from the sky could only to a greater or lesser extent help the ground troops, who had to stop the enemy advance by a stubborn defense. Therefore, simultaneously with the switching of the actions of the Air Force of the Northern Front from the "Finnish" to the "German" front, the Stavka began to transfer motorized formations of the 4th Tank Group of the Wehrmacht and land units of the Northern Front towards the advancing on Rezekne - Ostrov.

The first formations of 1 MK were transferred to the southwest. Recall that on June 22-24, the mechanized corps, having traveled 200 km along the route Pskov - Luga - Gatchina, concentrated in the southern suburbs of Leningrad. On June 30, 1941, by order of the Headquarters of the Civil Code, by combat order No. 19 of the headquarters of the Northern Front, the 1st mechanized corps was reassigned to the commander of the North-Western Front (339). On July 1, already by order of the command of the North-Western Front, the 163rd motorized division was withdrawn from the 1st MK. The division was transferred to the operational subordination of the commander of the 27th Army of the North-Western Front and received the task of forced march to concentrate in the Karsava-Rezekne area. The tank regiment of the division (25 TP), which had 229 T-26 light tanks before the war, received a company of the latest heavy KV tanks before being sent to the North-Western Front, but due to the untimely supply of rolling stock, *"the first echelons of the 25th tank regiment began to arrive at the station. Rezhitsa (Rezekne) only on July 3, 1941, by 11 o'clock, consisting of up to about one and a half battalions. The rest of the trains are on*

the route was repeatedly bombarded from the air and ground fired by the enemy, and until July 3 their arrival in the 163rd motorized division was not established " (342). Be that as it may, at 5:00 on July 3,

the commander of the 163rd MD, Major General Kuznetsov issues Combat Order No. 5:

"By 7:00, the 3.7th division without 25 tank troops and 3/365 ap (the 3rd division of the artillery regiment) takes its starting position for an attack on Dvinsk. Start the offensive at 09:00 3.7... Avoid excessive nervousness and panic in your ranks, as well as indiscriminate firing at aircraft..." (340)

As the division

commander looked into the water, warning about the inadmissibility of "excessive nervousness and panic". 163 md fought for only two days. In the archives of the division, a half sheet is kept from a student notebook "in a box", on which the following order is written in pencil: *"To the commander of 163 md. By the end*

of 5.7.41, the division should be assembled in the area north of Opochka, put in order and prepare defenses along the right bank of the river. Great in the district of Opochka - Goryachevo " (341).

The order was signed by the commander of the 27th Army, General Berzarin, the future military commandant

of Berlin ... One of the elements of "putting in order" was the appointment of a new command staff. In accordance with the order (b / n) dated July 6, Captain Bushuev was appointed acting commander of 759 SMEs, acting. chief of staff of the regiment - Lieutenant Sukhov, acting. Commander of the 529th SME - Captain Gagin, acting chief of staff of the regiment - Lieutenant Gorelik (343). The

appointment of captains and even lieutenants (!) to such positions exhaustively describes the state in which the division was. Already two weeks after the defeat, on July 17 at 10:00, the chief of staff of the 163rd MD, Colonel Bogdanovich, signed Operational Report No. 31:

"The division does not have direct contact with the enemy ... Groups and individuals continue to arrive in the division, leaving behind enemy lines and lagging behind in the Rezhitsa (Rezekne) region after fierce battles on July 3-4 ...

Availability of materiel: - 335 anti-aircraft artillery division - without m / h;

- 364 artillery regiment - two guns (out of 36 according to the staffing table. - M.S.);

- 205 anti-tank division - three guns (from 18 to staffing - M.S.); - 177 reconnaissance battalions - without materiel " (344).

Nevertheless, the division delayed the advance of the Germans for several days. This can be judged at least by the following passage from Manstein's memoirs:

*"... The 56th Panzer Corps turned sharply to the east, to Sebezh - Opochka ... Unfortunately, our fears about the swampy terrain were justified. True, the 8th Panzer Division found a path leading through the swamps. But it **was filled with vehicles of the Soviet motorized division, which remained here** (emphasized by me. - M.S.). It took days to clear the road and restore the destroyed bridges..." (182, p. 194) dislocations. After sending the 1st Panzer Division to the Arctic, and the 163rd Motorized Division to Rezekne, the*

"main forces" of the corps were reduced to one (3rd) Panzer Division and a separate corps motorcycle regiment (moreover, the 3rd anti-aircraft artillery division was still on June 28 was withdrawn from the division and "sent to Leningrad to carry out a special task") (361). Further - less. "On July 4, on the basis of a personal order from the Chief of Staff of the North-Western Front, a motorized rifle regiment with a motorcycle company was taken from the 3rd Panzer Division from the 5th Motorcycle Regiment, which was assigned a separate task ..." (342) Thus, the mechanized corps (reduced already up to the size of one tank division) was left almost without its own infantry.

In such a situation, the possibility of conducting successful military operations depended on the organization of close cooperation with the infantry of neighboring rifle formations.

Theoretically, there was infantry. On the line Pskov - Ostrov (and on this line, in addition to the natural river barrier, there were also concrete pillboxes of the Pskov and Ostrov fortified areas) the 41st Rifle Corps (118 Rifle Division, 111 Rifle Division, 235 Rifle Division, 90 Rifle Division) advanced from the reserves of the Stavka. K 4

July, two divisions of the 41st SC (118th and 111th) have already arrived in the indicated deployment areas. On this day, July 4, 1941, the 1st Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht occupied the city of Ostrov almost without a fight. In the hands of the enemy were two (road and rail) unexploded bridges across the river. Great. Having captured Ostrov and the bridges across the Velikaya, the German tank formations went to the "finish line" for a breakthrough on Leningrad. At 2 am on July 5, 1941, the headquarters of the North-Western Front issued a very short Combat Order No. 14: *"First. As a result of the battle on July 4, 1941, the enemy*

captured the Island. Second. With the dawn, the joint actions of the 111th Rifle Division and the 3rd Panzer Division, with the support of aviation, destroy the enemy in the Ostrov area, capture Ostrov and the 111th Rifle Division completely occupy its defense zone "(333, p. 133) .

Judging by the report of the commander of the 1st MK, Major General M.L. Chernyavsky, the battle for the city of Ostrov developed as follows:

"... The attack began at 15:25. As a result of the battle with enemy tanks and artillery, the 5th Tank Regiment of the 3rd Tank Division led individual units to the left bank of the river. The Great took possession of the mountains. Island, but without artillery and air support (only the 3rd howitzer artillery regiment in the amount of 24 guns participated in the battle, and aviation did not take part), in this battle the division suffered heavy losses in materiel and personnel from enemy anti-tank and artillery fire composition. There was no infantry to secure the occupied line and clear the city from the enemy (there were up to one and a half battalions of the 111th Infantry Division of the 41st SC, and the rest of the infantry randomly retreated). ... On July 5, at 15:55 minutes (that is, half an hour after the start of the attack. - M.S.) , the enemy, with strong artillery and air support,

launched a counterattack. The 3rd Panzer Division, having not received reinforcements (and especially infantry), stubbornly held back the attack until 17:00, but under the attack of dive bombers that used incendiary bombs and a combustible mixture, powerful artillery and mortars, suffering heavy losses, at 19:00 began to withdraw 5 -m tank regiment along the highway to Porkhov, and the 6th tank regiment in the north direction ... " (345)

By the end of the day, the remnants of the division's tank regiments retreated along divergent directions 50–60 km from

Ostrov. The command of the North-Western Front gave a slightly different assessment of what happened near the Island. On July 6, the commander of the 1st MK was sent the following combat order:

"1. You did not take measures to establish cooperation with the infantry and misled the Military Council that there was no infantry, while it was in the area of operations, the headquarters of the 41st Rifle Corps and the 111th Rifle Division were also there. 2. Despite

the huge losses of the Germans near Ostrov, you did not show perseverance and began to retreat without reason, and with your reports about the breakthrough of the Germans misled the Military Council of the front ... I

draw your attention to misbehavior and order: stop the retreat and take part in a general counterattack on An island with the aim of finally defeating the Germans ... Bring the execution to me by 22:00 6.7 " (333, p. 153). There was no one and nothing to fulfill. According

to the report of the corps commander, *"there are left in the 3rd Panzer Division: in the 5th Panzer Regiment - 1 T-28 tank and 14 BT-7 tanks; in the 6th tank regiment - 2 KV tanks, 26 BT-7 tanks. 43 tanks in total. At the beginning of June 1941, there were 337*

tanks (40 T-28s, 70 T-26s, 227 BT-7s) in the 3rd TD. By June 30, 1941, after the march from Porkhov to Leningrad, 278 tanks (26 T-28, 60 T-26, 192 BT-7) (362) entered the concentration area. The division entered the disposal of the North-Western Front, having in service (according to various sources) from 200 to 258 tanks (including 10 of the newest heavy KVs received from the Kirov plant in Leningrad). By July 15, 1941, 4 T-28, 2 KV and 16 BT-7 tanks remained in the regiments of the 3rd Panzer Division. Only 22 tanks, or 7% of the original number. Huge losses of Soviet tanks in the battle near the town of Ostrov are also confirmed by enemy documents, according to which "the 1st Panzer Division destroyed more than 140 tanks in the bridgehead of Ostrov" (346). "On July 6, by combat order No. 020 of the commander of the North-Western Front, the 3rd Panzer

Division was subordinated to the commander of the 22nd SC ... On July 7, by cipher telegram No. 881 / Sh, deputy. Chief of Staff of the North

The Western Front handed over the order of the commander on the subordination of the 3rd TD to the commander of the 41st SC ... As a result of these resubordinations, the commander of the 22nd SC left the 5th tank regiment, which was located on his site, under his control and did not return it to the division. The 6th tank regiment was subordinate to the commander of the 41st SC. Thus, from July 7, the 3rd Panzer Division as an independent combat unit ceased to exist ... ” (345) The

meeting battle on July 5 near the city of Ostrov was actually the last major tank battle of 1941 in the northwestern direction (Baltic - Leningrad). Nevertheless, in what Soviet historiography calls the "Leningrad strategic defensive operation" (July 10-September 30, 1941), the Red Army lost 1,492 tanks (9, p. 368). Taking into account the above losses in the "Baltic defensive operation", the total losses in the northwestern strategic direction **from June 22 to September 30 amounted to 4015 tanks.**

The 4th Panzer Group of the Wehrmacht, which operated in this direction, by the beginning of hostilities, had in its three tank divisions (1 TD, 6 TD, 8 TD) only 563 tanks (and another 39 "commander tanks" armed only with machine guns). Three-quarters of the entire tank fleet of the 4th TGr (412 out of 563) were light tanks with bulletproof armor, armed with small-caliber (20-mm and 37-mm) guns ("Pz-II", "Pz-35" (t), "Pz-38" (t)). In the 6th Panzer Division of the Wehrmacht, more than half of all tanks (155 out of 232) were light Czech tanks "Pz-35" (t) - just as obsolete and worn out as the BT-5 scattered on the move from the 24th tank division 10MK. **By September 10, 1941**, the irretrievable losses of the 4th TGr of the Wehrmacht amounted to 121 tanks, and another 71 tanks were considered temporarily out of order. For two and a half months of fighting, the 4th TGr received 2 (two) tanks to make up for losses, as a result, in early September 1941, the number of combat-ready tanks of the group decreased to 373 units (184).

The 10th mechanized corps was the last to be removed from the Karelian Isthmus and sent towards the advancing German divisions. On July 5, 1941, the headquarters of the 23rd Army and the 10th Mechanized Corps received orders for the immediate transfer of tank formations of the corps to the area

southern suburbs of Leningrad, i.e. to the place of pre-war deployment of 10 MK. On the evening of July 5, the first echelons with tanks left the Tali and Yasky stations, by July 7 the 21st and 24th tank divisions concentrated in the Pushkin-Gatchina area. Their fighting on the front of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish war ended there. Probably, if all the gasoline spent on the redeployment of two tank divisions from Gatchina to Vyborg and back was simply poured onto the adjacent Finnish territory, the effect would be great. At the very least, the forest near the Imatra station would definitely have been burned

to the ground ... Before "giving up" to the neighboring front two tank divisions of the 10th mechanized corps, the commander of the 23rd Army, Lieutenant General Pshennikov, ordered the creation of an "Army Tank Group" not provided for by any charters, to staff which the 10th mechanized corps was finally dismantled: 54 tanks were taken from the 21st TD, 102 tanks from the 24th TD (albeit, mainly the obsolete BT-2 tanks). Contrary to widespread rumors that "there was order in the country under Stalin," the lieutenant general allowed himself to violate the Stavka Directive and "stash" a total of half the tanks of the 10th mechanized corps. During the multi-day return march from the Finnish border to the defensive line on the Luga River (more than 250 km), some of the remaining tanks in the corps broke down. As a result, on July 9, it was decided in each of the divisions to bring the remaining 100 serviceable tanks into one consolidated tank regiment, and distribute the rest of the vehicles among rifle units. In just two weeks, the tank corps actually melted away. Like mist at dawn.

And the 198th motorized division never returned to the 10th mechanized corps. On July 4-6, this division, together with other units (461 rp and 701 rp from the 142nd sd, 708 rp from the 115th rp, 260 rp and 462 rp from the 168th rg) unsuccessfully tried to push the 2nd infantry division of the Finns beyond the state border line in the Esco-Meriya area. In these battles, 198 MD lost 9 tanks, 61 people were killed, 266 were wounded (329). Attached to reinforce the troops of the 19th Rifle Corps, the 41st Tank Regiment (from the 21st TD) irretrievably lost 5 tanks, evacuated from the battlefield and restored another 5 tanks. *"In the battle, the chief of staff of the 41st TP, Major Gavrilov, was killed by a White Finnish shell. Killed: middle command personnel - 1*

private - 2 " (318). Judging by the records in the ZhBD of the 23rd Army, the Finns held the Esko area they occupied on July 1-2, and by the end of July 9 they also occupied

Ristalahti (330). And then came the day of July 10, 1941.

Chapter

4.2 Defeat

After the Stalinist leadership did a huge, versatile, multifaceted job (the culmination of which was a massive air strike on June 25, 1941) to draw out this work many months, Finland entered a new war against the USSR, it began to remove all reserve formations from the Northern Front and hastily transfer them to the south West, towards the advancing German troops. By the end of the first week of June, all units of the front subordination of the Northern Front (1 MK, 10 MK, 70 Rifle Division, 191 Rifle Division, 177 Rifle Division) were transferred to Ostrov, Pskov, Luga. The 237th Rifle Division was withdrawn from the 7th Army, which managed to stay in Karelia for no more than 3-4 days.

There is no doubt that the situation on the southern approaches to Leningrad was catastrophic and extraordinary measures were required to save Leningrad. On July 9, 1941, practically without a fight, on the shoulders of the panicked 118th and 111th rifle divisions, the Germans entered Pskov. The defensive line along the Velikaya River (Pskov and Ostrovsky fortified areas) was broken along the entire front. In mid-July 1941, the fighting was already at the turn of the river. Meadows, that is, a hundred kilometers from Leningrad. There were no long-term defensive structures on the southern approaches to Leningrad at all (according to all pre-war plans, the line of the Western Dvina River was considered the maximum possible line of retreat; Pskov and Ostrovsky URs were built even before the Baltic was included in the USSR), and tens of thousands of citizens dug trenches on the last, Luga frontier. In the city, divisions of the "people's militia" were hastily created, recruited for the most part from among the students and teachers of Leningrad universities who had never held weapons in their hands. Poorly armed and almost untrained units were thrown one after another to hold the front along the Luga River.

Of course, in such a situation, the Headquarters of the Civil Code could not but use the troops of the Northern Front as the first source of reserves in turn to strengthen the defense on the Luga line. However, ignoring the problem is not the way to solve it.

Problems. Rather the opposite. Stalin and his comrades created - not for themselves personally, but for the whole country - a big problem on the Finnish border. On July 26, 1941, this "problem" was formalized in the form of a declaration of war by Finland. Another war and another front could not disappear of their own accord, simply because no one paid attention to them. To resolve the conflict between the USSR and Finland, which had escalated to the level of a war, actions were required - as extraordinary as those that were taken to defend Leningrad. Strictly speaking, there were exactly three possible options for action:

- start (perhaps with the assistance of the new allies of the USSR, i.e. England and the USA) peace negotiations with

- Finland; - silently withdraw the troops of the Northern Front to the line of the Karelian UR and the Svir River, i.e. de facto return to Finland (and return with a large "addition") the territories annexed from it, thus shorten the front line and strengthen the defense capability of the troops through the use of natural (Svir) and artificial (Karelian UR) obstacles; - to find and

- transfer to the Northern Front additional reserves, allowing to keep the defense along the line of the existing border (borders of 1940). The first two options,

- judging by the actual events that took place, were not even

considered. In fact, some semblance of the third option was

implemented - during the summer and autumn of 1941, the

Headquarters sent seven rifle divisions to the Finnish front (88 rifle

divisions, 272 rifle divisions, 313 rifle divisions, 314 rifle divisions, 114

rifle divisions, 265 rifle divisions, 291 rifle divisions), three separate

tank brigades (46 TB, 106 TB, 107 TB), the 3rd Leningrad division of

the "people's militia", the 3rd marine brigade, two motorized regiments

(24th and 9th) of the NKVD troops. In addition, the 186th Rifle Division

and Marine Brigade were formed in Murmansk, and the 131st Rifle

Regiment was formed in Petrozavodsk. In other words, in the end, a

significantly larger number of troops had to be sent to the Finnish front than was withdrawn from the Northern Front at the beginning of July 1941. But this happened exactly in the "end", and it all ended

with the withdrawal of the Soviet troops (more precisely, they lost a large part of the

scattered remnants of the divisions of the Northern Front) to the above-mentioned line of the Karelian fortified area and the Svir

River. The history of the defeat of the troops of the Northern (later - Karelian) Front in July - September 1941 is described in sufficient detail in the military history literature (17, 65, 133, 154, 314, 315, 316, 352, 354). Since chronologically this topic is beyond the scope of the subject of our study (i.e., the history of the emergence of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War), in this chapter we will limit ourselves to only a brief summaries of the above sources.

By the beginning of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War, the Finnish Armed Forces had significantly strengthened - both quantitatively and qualitatively. The ground forces now had 16 infantry divisions, two jaeger and one armored cavalry brigades. In total, there were 400, according to other authors, 500 thousand people in military service. Some even give a figure of 600 thousand people, not forgetting to immediately add that this is equal to the size of Napoleon's army that invaded Russia in 1812. Strange, but such figures did not cause a desire to think about the question:

how could an army of such size appear in a country with a population of less than 4 million people? Of course, if by "army" we mean a crowd of peasants armed with pitchforks, axes and clubs, then in Finland it was possible to recruit two "armies" of 600 thousand people each. If we talk about divisions armed, trained and provided with ammunition (and this is the most expensive component of the material support of hostilities) for at least a few months of the war, then the origin of a simple statistical rule will become clear: "A million people - one division." The Soviet Union was an extremely militarized state, so with a population of 200 million, it entered the war with an army of 303 divisions. 17 "estimated divisions" with a population of 3.7 million people is the same as 920 divisions in the Red Army. Even the infinitely rich Soviet Union could not bear such a military burden. The peacetime army of Finland had a strength of about 36 thousand people. The "Winter War" forced literally everyone who was able to hold this gun in their hands to put under arms. By the end

In 1940, after the demobilization of most of the military conscription, there were still 109 thousand people in the armed forces. In January 1941, it was decided to increase the strength of the peacetime army to 75 thousand people, of which 15 thousand serve on a professional basis, and 60 thousand are called up for military service. Nevertheless, the above figures (16 divisions and three brigades) are true. The solution to this "miracle" consists of four components.

Firstly, the Finnish divisions (even by the appearance of the personnel, which is visible in any photograph or military newsreel of those years) were more like divisions of the "people's army" of the times of the civil war than professional army personnel formations. Their staffing was made on the basis of territorial paramilitary organizations (the "shutskor" created back in 1918), and almost half of the rank and file received only minimal military training. Secondly, Finland could withstand the burden of maintaining and equipping the army in 17 "estimated divisions" only for a very short time. We can say that the Finnish army had to either win the "blitzkrieg" or die. Thirdly, the armament (especially for artillery) of the Finnish division was noticeably inferior to Soviet or German "standards". Fourthly, even this level of technical equipment became possible only thanks to the large-scale deliveries of weapons from Germany, which began in October 1940. Now let's translate these general arguments into the language of specific figures. According to the staffing table in April 1941, the Red Army rifle

division had two artillery regiments armed with 12 152-mm howitzers, 32 122-mm howitzers and 16 76.2 mm guns. Accordingly, to equip 17 such divisions, 204 152-mm howitzers and 544 122-mm howitzers were required. In fact, much more guns are required, since divisions are combined into corps, corps into armies, and corps and army artillery regiments also need to be armed with something. During the "winter war" Finland had almost no artillery of medium and large caliber. Mainly due to German supplies, the Finnish army by the summer of 1941 already had 178

artillery systems of caliber 150-155 mm and 278 artillery systems of caliber 105-122 mm. Significantly less than is required to arm the army by world standards, but already much more than it was just a year ago.

Another illustrative example is associated with anti-tank artillery. In the first weeks of the "winter war" the Finnish army was practically unarmed in the face of the huge armored armadas of the Red Army. In July 1941, there were no more "armored armadas" in the composition of the troops of the Northern Front, and the Finnish army in 40–41. received from Germany about 200 German anti-tank 37-mm Pak-36 guns and more than 200 captured French 25-mm Marianne guns. In addition, about 350 licensed Swedish 37-mm Bofors guns were produced at Finnish factories. By the beginning of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War, the Finnish army was already armed with about 900 anti-tank guns, which is an average of more than 50 guns per division - a quite worthy indicator. To combat the new Soviet tanks ("T-34" and "KV"), all these small-caliber guns would have been practically useless, but, as you know, there were almost no tanks of new types in the troops of the Northern Front, and the armor of light tanks "BT" and "T-26" the aforementioned guns pierced with a guarantee. Now let's look at the artillery of the Finnish army through the eyes of those who fought

with this army. On December 15, 1941, the "Reference on taking into account the experience of the battles of the Patriotic War on the front of the 23rd Army" was signed. In this document we read:

"... The saturation of the Finnish army with artillery compared to the Red Army is much lower ... A characteristic feature is the absence of a massive use of enemy artillery even in the areas of penetration of our defense. The artillery preparation before the offensive was, as a rule, short (10-30 minutes) with a small number of shells ... " (353) By the beginning of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War, the

formations of the Finnish army were deployed as follows. In the north of Finland, in the Kuusamo-

Suomussalmi strip, there was the 3rd Army Corps (3 AK) consisting of two infantry

divisions (6 pd and 3 pd). This corps was transferred to the operational subordination of the German command.

In the area of the city of Kuhmo, 14 infantry divisions were deployed, having the task attack the Rebolas - Landers.

In Ladoga Karelia, in the strip from Kuolismaa to Lahdenpokhya, the "Karelian Army" was deployed under the command of the Chief of the General Staff of the Finnish Army, General Heinrichs. It consisted of two jaegers and an armored cavalry brigade, united in the group of General Oinonen (Group "O"), 6 AK (5 PD and 11 PD) and 7 AK (7 PD and 19 RD). In the reserve of the "Karelian Army" there was one Finnish division (1 infantry division) and the German 163 infantry division, which arrived in mid-July 1941 (one regiment of which was transferred to the Arctic, to the Kandalaksha direction). There are six divisions and three brigades in total (see Map No. 14).

On the border of the Karelian Isthmus, 2 AKs were deployed (2 front, 15 pd, 18 pd) and 4 AK (12 pd, 4 pd, 8 pd).

The reserve was 10 pd. In total, seven Finnish divisions were deployed in this way on the sector of the 23rd Army. The 17th Infantry

Division was initially located in the area north of the Khanko Peninsula, but then was withdrawn to the Mannerheim reserve and sent to Karelia on July 17.

After the transfer of all the reserve formations of the Northern Front to the south, to the defense zone of the North-Western Front, on the Karelian Isthmus and in Ladoga Karelia, only seven rifle divisions of the Red Army remained. Moreover, they were distributed extremely unevenly: five divisions of the 23rd Army (142 RD, 115 RD, 198 MD, 43 RD and 123 RD), reinforced by four heavy artillery regiments of the RGK, were located on the Karelian Isthmus, and only two (71 RD and 168 sd) divisions of the 7th Army were in Ladoga Karelia (see Map 14). Such a distribution of forces clearly indicates that the Soviet command had no idea about the real operational plans of the enemy. There were no "Mannerheim's secrets on Stalin's table" at all, and fortune-telling about the possible directions of the main attack of the Finnish army was based, alas, on the myths and incantations of Soviet propaganda. This propaganda for so long and so loudly shouted about the "White Finnish military, which pulls its dirty paws to the city of Lenin," which finally convinced its customers of this. That the Finnish army will start

fighting from the liberation of the annexed territories in the Ladoga Karelia, Moscow clearly did not expect.

The fighting of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War is distinctly
break down into three stages:

- offensive in Ladoga Karelia (July 1941); - the offensive of the Finnish army on the Karelian Isthmus (August 1941); - the offensive

- of the Finnish army to the Svir River and Lake Onega (September - October 1941). **The offensive**

in Ladoga Karelia began on July 10, 1941. The plan of the operation was as follows. The main blow was delivered by 6 AK (two rifle divisions) at the junction of the 168th and 71st rifle divisions of the 7th Army.

Advancing along the eastern shore of Lake Janisjarvi, the corps was to reach the shore of Lake Ladoga, and then advance on Olonets and Svir. Mannerheim appointed commander of the 6th Army Corps a veteran of the civil war (in Finnish right-wing historiography it is called the "war of liberation" or "war of independence"), the commander of the Finnish volunteers in 1919 and 1921 P. Talvela. In his memoirs, Mannerheim writes: *"Since the time of the liberation war, I have known him as a fearless and strong-willed leader who even has a certain amount of impudence necessary to launch a counterattack against an enemy that is superior in strength"* (22). This time, the enemy of General Talvel was significantly outnumbered: two divisions of the 6th Corps struck at the defense sector of two regiments (52 joint ventures and 367 joint ventures) of the 71st "Karelian-Finnish" division. Two infantry divisions of the 7th AK were to advance on Sortavala, capture this city and the railway station, thus cutting off the 7th Army from communication with the 23rd Army. Jaeger brigades of group "O" (these were units of lightly armed infantry moving on bicycles; in off-road forest conditions they successfully fulfilled the role of tank brigades absent in the Finnish army) were to break into the deep rear of the 7th Army and go out along a huge 120-kilometer arc to the coast of Lake Ladoga, cutting the lines of communication of the Soviet troops.

On the day the offensive began, Mannerheim published his later famous (one might say "infamous")

Order No.

3. *"During the liberation war of 1918, I told the Karelians of Finland and White Sea Karelia that I would not sheathe my sword until Finland and East Karelia were free. I swore this in the name of the Finnish peasant army, thus trusting the courage of our men and the sacrifice of our women.*

For twenty-three years, the White Sea and Olonets Karelia have been waiting for the fulfillment of this promise; For a year and a half, Finnish Karelia, depopulated after the valiant Winter War, was waiting for the dawn

to rise. Soldiers of the Liberation War, illustrious men of the Winter War, my brave soldiers! A new day is dawning. Karelia joins our marching ranks with its battalions. The freedom of Karelia and the greatness of Finland shine before us in a powerful stream of world historical events. May Providence, which determines the fate of peoples, help the Finnish army to fully fulfill the promise that I made to the Karelian tribe.

Soldiers! This land that you will step on is watered with the blood of our fellow tribesmen and saturated with suffering, it is a holy land. Your victory will liberate Karelia, your deeds will create a great and happy future for Finland" (37).

The mention of the White Sea and Olonets Karelia clearly indicates that the goals of the operation went far (in every sense of the word) beyond the return of the territories annexed in March 1940. Reminding the soldiers of the "war of liberation" and the "peasant army" of 1918, Mannerheim thus defined the war that had begun as a continuation not only of the "winter war" of 1939-1940, but also as the final stage of the civil war that blazed in Karelia in 1919-1921 years. In 1945-46, many leaders of Finland would have paid dearly for the fact that such an order never existed ... In the first days of the fighting, the offensive of the Finnish troops developed exceptionally

successfully. On July 14, the Loymola station was occupied, on July 16, the 1st Jaeger brigade of Colonel Lagus in the Pitkyaranta region reached the shore of Lake Ladoga. This meant that both supply lines of the 168th Rifle Division (the railway line Petrozavodsk - Suoyarvi - Sortavala and the road along the eastern coast

Lake Ladoga) were cut. The 71st Rifle Division actually ceased to exist as a single entity. The left-flank 367th Rifle Rifle Regiment was pushed back into the defense zone of the 168th Rifle Division, the remnants of the 52nd Rifle Rifle Division were driven back to Suojärvi, the right-flank 126th Rifle Rifle Regiment withdrew to a deserted forest area near Kuolismaa, where (as Soviet historians write)

"successfully held the defense" until September 1941. Already 13 In July, the headquarters of the 7th Army moved from Suojärvi to Pryazha. Absolutely unique "relocation" was carried out by the headquarters of the 71st division. He was *"evacuated (???) along Ladoga to Leningrad, and then by July 20 transferred by rail to Suoyarvi"* (354, p. 250). Meanwhile, Talvel's corps continued its offensive along the shores of Lake Ladoga and on July 22 reached the 1939 border near the village of Vidlitsa. On July 24, 6th AK reached the

line of the Tuuloksa (Tuulosjoki) River, which was the last natural obstacle on the way of Finnish troops to Olonets and the Svir River. While the 6th AK passed over 150 km in two weeks during a continuous offensive, the 7th AK unsuccessfully tried to break through the defenses of the 168th rifle division of Colonel Bondarev at the very border. The steadfastness and courage of the Soviet troops, concrete pillboxes, minefields and 42 km of wire fences in the Sortavala fortified area turned out to be an insurmountable obstacle for the Finnish infantry. For the whole of July 1941, with heavy losses (5.5 thousand people, including 1.5 thousand killed), gnawing through the defenses of Bondarev's division, the Finns advanced 10–15 km to the village of Ruskeala on the Loymola railway line - Sortavala. The Finns failed to capture or surround Sortavala from the west. Since all communication with the units and headquarters

of the 7th Army thrown far to the east was lost, on July 21 the Sortavala group of troops (168th rifle division and 367th joint venture of the 71st division) was transferred to the 23rd Army. At that moment, when Talvel's corps reached the line of the Tuloksa River, in fact there were no large forces of the Red Army in front of him. Talvela insisted on the further development of the breakthrough, and after he was denied this, he bitterly spoke (September 2 , 1941) to the German General Engelb

shore" (65, p. 240). Mannerheim, however, looked at the situation otherwise:

"... Talvela demanded that the troops again go on the offensive from the line of the Tuulosjoki River, but I, knowing his impulsive nature, considered it necessary to notice to him that the time was not yet ripe for this. Offensives must not be launched until the supply lines are put in order and additional forces taken from other sectors of the front are concentrated. I didn't want any lightning-fast successes..." (22) Additional forces (1st Finnish Infantry Division, 163rd Infantry Division of the

Wehrmacht, a little later and the 17th Finnish Infantry Division) were sent on the offensive along the railway line from Loimola to Suojärvi and further, bypassing the northern bank of the Syamozero, to Petrozavodsk. Meanwhile, the Soviet command, having recovered from the first shock, began to feverishly collect new units and formations. In Petrozavodsk, on the basis of the 31st reserve regiment and with the involvement of the party and Komsomol activists of the city, the 131st rifle regiment was formed. To reinforce the regiment, an armored train that happened to be near Petrozavodsk was attached, and already on July 13, the formation formed in the fire order was sent by rail to Suoyarvi. Another (along with the party asset) reserve of the 7th Army was the NKVD troops, which were deployed in large numbers in the Soviet "Karelo-Finland", which in the 30s became one of the largest "islands" of the Gulag archipelago.

Two motorized regiments of the NKVD troops (9 SMEs and 24 SMEs) on July 16 were transferred to the operational subordination of the command of the 7th Army. Then the 452nd regiment of the 198th motorized division and the 7th motorcycle regiment (10th mechanized corps), the 3rd Marine Brigade, several separate tank companies and artillery battalions.

On July 21, 1941, the Commander-in-Chief of the North-Western Strategic Direction, a member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, one of the five members of the State Defense Committee, Marshal K. Voroshilov arrived at the headquarters of the 7th Army, located near the village of Pryazha (by a strange coincidence, on this very day at the headquarter

Field Marshal Leeb, commander of Army Group North, Hitler arrived). At the headquarters of the 7th Army on July 21, several important decisions were made. First, Voroshilov ordered the army headquarters to immediately return to Suoyarvi. Secondly, two relatively large Operational Groups were formed: the Petrozavodsk OG (9th and 24th regiments of the NKVD, 10th reserve joint venture) and the Southern OG (3rd brigade of marines, 452 infantry and 7 infantry regiments). On the same day, July 21, 1941, at the station lost in the dense forests, the paths of the "First Marshal" and the 1st Panzer Division of the 1st Mechanized Corps

crossed. The attentive reader may still remember that on June 17 this division received an order to load into railway trains and arrive at the Alakurtti polar station. On July 1, 1941, in the area of the city of Salla, the 36th Wehrmacht Corps (169 infantry division and the SS motorized brigade "Nord") went on the offensive. During a week of fierce fighting, the tankers of General Baranov, despite the clearly "anti-tank" terrain, successfully counterattacked the enemy and repeatedly turned the SS brigade into a stampede. *"Early on the morning of July 4, the headquarters of the 36th AK witnessed an amazing event: the entire SS division was rapidly rushing on motorcycles towards Rovaniemi, and Russian tanks were chasing it on its heels. For several hours, the corps headquarters, including the chief of staff, stopped the SS men and sent them back to their positions ... some raced 80 km without stopping to Kemijärvi, where they forced the local commandant to blow up the bridge across the river. Kemi to hold back the Russian tanks that are about to be here..."* (65, p. 200) confirms the fact that the meeting with Baranov's tank division made an indelible impression on the SS men, under the influence of which they rushed without looking back 80 km ...

Much more significant is another, and this time documented, fact: the 1st Panzer fought not only successfully, but also with "little bloodshed". The losses of the division in the battles near the city of Salla were relatively small, and even in comparison with the usual losses for the tragic summer of 1941, the losses of hundreds of other divisions of the Red Army were completely miserable. In total, from June 30 to July 7, the division lost 28 people.

killed, 30 missing, 58 wounded. 33 BT-7, 2 BA-10 and 1 BA-20 tanks (355) were irretrievably lost. In a separate automobile battalion of the division (236 cars and 2 motorcycles) *"there is not a single breakdown or forced stop."* Losses of personnel - 3 soldiers were wounded (356). The howitzer artillery regiment of the division lost only 8 people from June 22 to August 1 (1 killed, 7 wounded). Tractors (tractors) of the regiment in the amount of 36 units traveled an average of 279 km each, *"the regiment has no losses of equipment and vehicles"* (357). In general, the amazing history of the 1st Panzer Division can serve as a clear illustration of the paradoxical rule: "The bullet is afraid of the bold, the bayonet does not take the bold." It was in the 1st Tank Battalion of the 1st Tank Regiment of the 1st Tank Division that the crew of the legendary KV No. 864 tank under the command of Senior Lieutenant Z. Kolobanov fought. On August 19, 1941, in the battle on the Luga-Gatchina highway, this crew fought with 40 German tanks. KV received 156 direct hits from enemy shells, but remained unharmed. The Germans, as is commonly believed, then lost 22 tanks. The last figure is most likely many times overestimated, but the very fact of the successful battle of Kolobanov's crew is beyond doubt.

At 6 o'clock in the morning on July 15, 1941, after several categorical orders from the Headquarters, units of the 1st TD began loading into trains at the station. Alakurtti - the division, like all other tank formations of the Northern Front, was transferred to the Luga line of defense of Leningrad. True, not the entire division. Commander of the 14th Army, Lieutenant General V.A. Frolov, contrary to all the orders of the Headquarters, "started" the motorized rifle regiment of the division and the 3rd battalion of the 1st tank regiment. On July 17, exactly one month after the "peaceful summer day" the 1st Panzer was raised on combat alert, the echelons moved away from the Alakurtti station. On July 21, Voroshilov stopped the echelons of the division with his power and ordered the 2nd Tank Regiment to be unloaded. In the end, not a full-fledged, battle-hardened, well-trained tank division arrived at the Luga line, but, in fact, two tank battalions of the 1st tank regiment, armed with about 80 tanks ...

2nd tank regiment (it arrived in Petrozavodsk armed with 4 KV, 13 T-28, 29 BT-7, 57 BT-5, 32 T-26, total 135 tanks and 19 armored vehicles "BA-10" and "BA-20") were immediately torn to pieces

two parts: two tank battalions were transferred to the Petrozavodsk OG and one battalion to the Southern OG. It is difficult to understand the logic of such "operational art". And the point is not even in the already bad tradition of the first weeks and months of the war, the dismemberment of powerful "steel cores" into weak "pellets". Unfortunately, Marshal Voroshilov did not understand that a division of light tanks with bulletproof armor and small-caliber guns was not a magic wand, but a tool. A tool suitable for a specific job. The same one that in the wars of the last century was carried out by the Cossack horse lava: to drive and cut down the fleeing, to seize headquarters and warehouses, to burn carts in the rear of the enemy paralyzed by fear. And on the terrain with such names as Syamozero, Mashozero, Vedlozero, Kroshnozero, among the dense forests, swamps and lakes of Karelia, a tank regiment could only die heroically. What happened in reality. On July 23–27, 1941, a fierce

and almost the only forest battle between tanks and infantry broke out in the forests near Vedlozero. This time, the courageous tankers of Baranov's division met with an equally staunch and courageous enemy. Colonel Paalu's 1st Finnish Infantry Division, which was put into battle, had the combat experience of the "winter war" (including the experience of fighting Soviet tanks), but at the same time - incomparably better weapons than during the days of the "winter war". The light small-caliber guns of the Finnish army were the best suited for operations from forest ambushes (the French 25-mm anti-tank "Marianne" weighed only 310 kg, the 37-mm "Bofors" - 375 kg). Judging by the reports of the command of the Petrozavodsk OG, the motorized "Chekists" retreated after the very first shots, and the Finnish infantry successfully shot the tanks stuck in the swamps. However, the Finns apparently did not have enough guns, so bottles of gasoline and heavy drafts were used. A few days later, the offensive of the Petrozavodsk OG finally bogged down. The losses of the tank regiment amounted to 67 BT tanks and 279 personnel (366).

The German 163rd Infantry Division turned out to be of little use for fighting in the wooded and swampy areas and could not complete the task of capturing Suoyarvi on its own. Mannerheim was forced to transfer Jaeger brigades to the left flank of the "Karelian Army" and

send the main forces of 6 AK for an enveloping strike on the flank and rear of the grouping of Soviet troops near Suoyarvi. After the Finns cut the railway line near the southern bank of the Syamozero, the Soviet troops were forced to move east from Suojärvi. After the completion of this operation, Mannerheim considered it good to again enlist the German division in his reserve and withdraw it from the battle zone. On July 28, the 3rd Leningrad DNO arrived in Karelia, which was included in the Southern OG. In early August, the 272nd Rifle Division arrived from the Stavka reserve, which was then included in the Petrozavodsk OG. After the arrival of reinforcements, another stage of bloody attempts began to counterattack, supported by tanks, Finnish troops and push them back from Tuloks and Vedlozer to the west. However, in two weeks it was possible to move forward by only 10-15 km. In mid-August, the front in Ladoga Karelia stabilized on a line passing an average of 30–50 km east of the 1939 border. thousand wounded (354, p. 259).

The offensive on the Karelian Isthmus began on August 31, 1941. Since

all the reserves of the high command of the Finnish army were already involved in the battles in Ladoga Karelia, the offensive was carried out only by those forces that were near the border from the very beginning of the war: three infantry divisions of the 2nd AK, three infantry divisions 4 AK and a separate 10th Infantry Division (see Maps Nos. 13 and 15). Contrary to the months-long expectations of the command of the 23rd Army and the Northern Front, the Finns delivered the main blow not in the direction of Lappeenranta - Vyborg, but on the directly opposite flank of the defense of the 23rd Army, near the northern coast of Lake Ladoga.

On the eve of the start of the Finnish offensive (the coincidence, apparently, turned out to be purely accidental), the command of the 23rd Army tried to organize a counterattack along the shore of Lake Ladoga from Lahdenpohya to the northeast in order to push the Finnish troops away from Sortavala. To participate in the counterattack, the 198th division was involved (without 452 infantry regiments, previously redeployed to Karelia) and 181 joint ventures from the 43rd infantry division transferred from the left fla

on the morning of July 29, until the end of the day on July 31, the strike group advanced 3-4 km, and at this the offensive bogged down. The losses turned out to be unreasonably large. So, 198 md lost in these battles 168 people killed and 1704 wounded (358). The absolutely incredible ratio of the number of killed and wounded (1 to 10) is noteworthy. Of course, the fighters and commanders of the 198th MD could not differ in their anatomical structure from all other people (among whom the ratio of killed and wounded in all wars of the 20th century was approximately 1 to 3). They did not differ - in the period from July 4 to August 10, the losses of the 198th division amounted to 216 killed, 851 wounded and 583 missing (359). Most likely, the above figure of 1704 combines the wounded and the "missing."

Be that as it may, the failed attempt at a counteroffensive only helped the Finns, as it bled the only reserve of the 19th SC (198th division) and "condensed" the battle formations of the Soviet troops precisely on that sector of the front that the Finnish command was going to encircle. On July 31, 1941, after a short artillery preparation, the 2nd Infantry Division launched an attack on Lakhdenpokhya, and the 15th Infantry Division on Hiitola. In contrast to the situation in Ladoga Karelia, where the Finns launched an offensive on July 10, having a three-fold numerical superiority, in the battle near the northern coast of Ladoga, the forces of the parties were approximately equal. The first days of August passed there in fierce, bloody battles.

"Although during

these fierce battles," Mannerheim writes in his memoirs, " which I personally observed closely, I was repeatedly asked to throw in fresh forces, I kept this reserve (10th Infantry Division) and only on August 4 handed it over to corps commander, ordering to use it completely only in the direction indicated by me. The next day, a fresh division under the command of Colonel Sikhvo went on the offensive, dragging neighboring units with it, and on August 7 captured the village of Kaukola. The deep break was successfully completed on 8 August. The troops reached the shore of Lake Ladoga in the Lakhdenpokhya region, which meant that the communications of the Sortavala group of enemy troops were completely cut. August 11 fell an important node of the iron and

highways of Hiitola, and the wedge of the offensive reached the shore of Ladoga between Hiitola and Kexholm.

Already on August 4, on the fifth day of the Finnish offensive, Lieutenant General Pshennikov was removed from the post of commander of the 23rd Army, he was replaced by Major General M.A. Gerasimov, who had previously commanded the troops of the 19th SC.

On July 5, the commander of the Northern Front ordered Gerasimov to immediately withdraw the entire Sortavala grouping to the southwest, to Kexholm, but on August 6, Voroshilov canceled this order with his authority, ordering "to hold Sortavala at all costs" (360). To eliminate the Finnish breakthrough at Hiitol, the 23rd Army was transferred to the 265th Infantry Division, which the Headquarters had previously sent to Gatchina, that is, to the "German front".

265th Rifle Division was formed in the Moscow Military District, and *"up to 40% of the personnel who entered the formation of the division had previously served or worked in the NKVD system"* (354). On August 10, the command of the 23rd Army tried to carry out a counterattack with the forces of 265th Rifle Division and 115th Rifle Division in the area southeast of Hiitol, but everything ended completely to no avail, and on August 11 the enemy finally cut off the troops surrounded on the northern coast of Ladoga.

On August 15, Soviet troops left the city of Sortavala and retreated to the Ladoga skerries. It was decided to evacuate the encircled (the remnants of the troops of the 168th Rifle Division, 142nd Rifle Division, 198th Rifle Division, 367th Rifle Division of the 71st Division, part of the forces of the 115th Rifle Division) by water with the ships of the Ladoga military flotilla. By August 23, all the evacuated units were delivered to the island of Valaam and subsequently transported to Leningrad. In total, 26 thousand people, 155 guns were evacuated, which is approximately half of the regular strength of the encircled units and formations. The consolidated group, made up of border guards and scattered units of the retreating troops, under the command of Colonel S.I. Donskoy held Kexholm and the coastal road until August 21, 1941. On August 14-16,

the 10th Infantry Division continued its offensive to the south. In a two-day battle near the village of Raisala, the 265th rifle division was finally defeated. In the documents of the 43rd Infantry Regiment of the 10th Division

there is this entry:

"... The Russians bravely defended themselves, but the stubborn Finns attacked them, and the matter was quickly resolved ... According to the stories of the prisoners, the regiment commissar first made a fiery speech about Stalin and the Soviet Motherland, after which he took 6 submachine gunners, two light machine guns with him and fled ... Completely - the commander of the 946th Infantry Regiment, Major Lashenko, behaved differently - in his last hour he ordered the soldiers to shoot him ... " (314, p. 29)

Even before the end of the battle near the northwestern coast of Lake Ladoga, the 18th Infantry Division of Colonel Payari went on the offensive (this is the same division whose units on the evening of July 3 repelled an attempt by the 10th mechanized corps to capture and "ignite" Imatra station with "flamethrower tanks"). Having thrown back the 115th Rifle Division from the border (the surviving units of which retreated to the western bank of the Vuoksi River, to the defense zone of 5 ° CK), the Payari division quickly moved forward and on July 8-10 crossed the railway in the Antrea - Sayrala section.

On August 16, in the area of the village of Oravankyuto (east of Vuosalmi), the advanced units of the 18th infantry division were attacked by the forces of the 33rd border detachment and tank units attached to it. A fierce forest battle continued for three days, during which the Finns managed to surround and completely defeat the border guards, while the commander of the detachment and the combat banner of the unit were captured (314, p.

32). On the evening of August 17, the Payari division began to cross the Vuoksi River. A veteran of the division, Lieutenant L. Yantti, writes: *"In a day we have advanced far. Our 14th heavy artillery division crossed the Vuoksi on rafts. Even now, my hair stands on end when I remember how we loaded the guns onto rafts in pitch darkness ... "* (314, p. 35) By the middle of the day on August 18, the entire 27th Infantry Regiment was already on the west bank of the Vuoksi 18 km, seized a bridgehead 5 km deep. Apparently, only at that moment did the headquarters of the Northern Front understand

the simple and flawless plan of the Finnish command. Clearly aware of the weakness of their artillery and the almost complete absence of bomber aircraft and tanks, the Finns were not going to "punch through" the line of concrete pillboxes of the Vyborg fortified area.

Instead, an operation was planned and successfully carried out to force the river. Vuoksi with access to the rear of the entire

Vyborg grouping of Soviet troops. By August 20, on the western bank of the Vuoksi, in the bridgehead captured by the Payari division, there were already units of the 2nd and 10th infantry divisions. Commander of the Northern Front, Lieutenant General M.M. Popov turned to the Headquarters with a request to provide four fresh rifle divisions and one air division, but the Headquarters no longer had such reserves for the

"Finnish front". On August 20, with the permission of the high command of the 5 ° CK unit (43rd and 123rd rifle divisions), which had been idle for two months on the border, they began to blow up long-term fortifications and retreat south to Vyborg. On August 23, units of the 43rd and 115th rifle divisions, hastily withdrawn to the southeast of Vyborg, launched a counterattack with the task of eliminating the Finnish bridgehead on the western bank of the river. Vuoksi. A fierce battle continued for two days, sometimes turning into hand-to-hand combat. Both sides understood that in this battle the fate of the Vyborg group of troops of the 23rd Army would be finally decided. On August 25, with the support of the 12th Infantry Division, which rapidly advanced from the border along the western coast of the Vuoksi, the Finns defeated the Soviet troops and cut the railway line south of the station. Kamarya. Now only the only "thread" of the coastal road Vyborg - Koivisto connected the troops of

the 23rd Army with Leningrad. On the night of August 25, 1941, an event took place that can be considered one of the most outstanding achievements of the Finnish army - or one of the most shameful failures of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet. At a distance of 50 miles from the Kronstadt base of the fleet, the Finns launched and successfully completed an amphibious landing operation, landing an infantry division (8 infantry division) on the opposite shore of the Vyborg Bay. They landed without having a single large surface warship in this area of the Baltic and infinitely outnumbered by aviation. Having secured a foothold in the landing area, the 8th Infantry Division went on the offensive and on August 26 cut the seaside road between Vyborg and Koivisto. After that, units of three divisions of the Red Army (43 sd, 115 sd, 123 sd) received the last order - to destroy military equipment and retreat to Leningrad through the forest near the village of Porlampi.

It turned out to be impossible to retreat, since the Finnish troops (12th and 18th infantry divisions) had already organized a solid defense with a front to the northwest. Part of the troops managed to break through to the shore of the bay near the town of Koivisto. On the night of September 2, three large transports ("Meero", "Otto Schmidt" and "Bart"), accompanied by two minesweepers and two boats, left Kronstadt for Koivisto. Transport "Meero" hit a mine and sank. The remaining two transports, approaching the Koivisto pier at dawn, took on board about 6 thousand people and safely returned to Kronstadt. The evacuation of the personnel of the divisions defeated at Vyborg continued for several more weeks. In total, from 14 to 20 thousand people were evacuated (according to various sources). The rest ended up in Finnish captivity. The commander of the 43rd Infantry Division, Major General V.V., was also captured. Kirpichnikov (according to the verdict of the Military Collegium of the Supreme Court of the USSR for "loss of control of the troops and voluntary surrender" was shot on

July 28, 1950, in June 1957 he was rehabilitated). On August 29, the Finns entered Vyborg, barbarously destroyed by the retreating Soviet units. On August 31, the 12th Infantry Division occupied Terijoki, a border resort village in which, on December 1, 1939, the "people's government" of Mr. Kuusinen was allegedly established. On the same day, the 18th Infantry Division reached the world-famous village of Mainila, which became on November 26, 1939. The fighters of the Payari division did not deny themselves the pleasure of firing five ritual shots from a gun in the direction of the former border river Sestra.

The joy of victory (within one month, Finnish troops liberated the entire annexed territory of the Karelian Isthmus and regained three large cities: Vyborg, Kexholm and Sortavala) was overshadowed by heavy losses. The Finnish army paid a heavy price for the defeat of five personnel divisions of the Leningrad Military District. The total losses (killed and wounded) exceeded 25 thousand people. In some infantry regiments, losses amounted to 25-30% of the regular strength. So, the 28th Infantry Regiment lost 279 people killed and missing, 856 wounded. The 48th Infantry Regiment lost 358 men killed and missing, 923 wounded. The losses of the 7th Infantry Regiment amounted to 480 killed and 1622 wounded, that is, **more than half of the regular strength (363)**. For comparison, we recall that

for the first 40 days of the war (from June 22 to July 31), the losses of the Wehrmacht (killed, wounded, missing) on the Eastern Front amounted to only 6.5% of the total number of the group (entry in the Diary of F. Halder dated August 4, 1941 G.). Despite such heavy losses,

"the enemy had a pronounced offensive impulse." This is the conclusion reached by the compilers of the above-mentioned "Information on taking into account the experience of the battles of the Patriotic War on the front of the 23rd Army." Regarding the actions of our own troops, the following is said: *"Our main measure to counter the enemy*

offensive was the organization and deployment of numerous groups and detachments into battle. These hastily created detachments from different and heterogeneous units were not combat-ready enough, and some simply fled at the first meeting with the enemy ...

During the withdrawal period, units that did not have experience, training and proper organization could not cling to the next line, where to build a solid defense. In inexperienced and poorly fired units, sometimes an initiated retreat turned into a disorderly flight. Units and subunits dispersed, their control by commanders was lost ... Many of our units and subunits left (and often simply abandoned) their materiel (machine guns, mortars). Very often guns were left to the enemy because the infantry, which was attached to the artillery, abandoned it.

Unfortunately, a number of units did not have a rule not to leave the enemy our wounded and the corpses of the dead ...

Where our units showed stubbornness, initiative, perseverance and self-confidence, where the commanders ruled confidently and firmly - we had obvious successes ...) decided to withdraw the troops of

the 23rd Army to the line of the Karelian UR. It is difficult to say whether these troops existed that day, but the 23rd Army had a new (third in one month) commander, General A.I. Cherepanov. By September 3, the scattered remnants of the retreating and evacuated divisions by water were put in order and took up defensive positions on the line of the Karelian UR. The next day, September 4, 1941, **the Finnish units in Karelian**

the isthmus received an order to go on the defensive (however, individual skirmishes continued until about September 10). After that, the front stabilized on the line of the Karelian fortified area for almost three years, until June 9, 1944.

The offensive of the Finnish army to the Svir River and Lake Onega began on September 4, 1941. In addition to those units that fought in Karelia in July-August, the Finnish command transferred the 2nd Infantry division. Later, the 4th and 8th divisions were sent to Karelia. On the other hand, at the end of August, the Headquarters of the Red Army Civil Code decided to send two more reserve divisions to the 7th Army: 313th Rifle Division and 314th Rifle Division. These two rifle divisions really arrived in Karelia, but after another defeat had become a fait accompli. On September 4, the 6th Corps of General P. Talvel (three divisions), together with the 1st Jaeger Brigade, launched an

offensive from the line of the Tuloksy River to Olonets. This day became the "artillery day" of the Finnish army - 16 divisions (about two hundred guns) took part in the artillery preparation. By the standards of the impoverished Finnish army, this was a huge concentration of firepower (June 9, 1944, the Red Army offensive began with an artillery strike, in which 3.5 thousand guns took part, providing a fire density of 250-300 barrels per one km of the breakthrough front) . On the second day of the offensive, the Finns occupied Olonets, on September 7 they reached the banks of the Svir River. On September 8, the Jaeger brigade of Colonel Lagus captured the strategically important railway bridge across the Svir in the area of st. Podporozhye (later Colonel Lagus became the first holder of the highest Finnish Order of the Mannerheim Cross). Further attempts by the Finns to expand the bridgehead on the southern bank of the Svir were stopped by the 314th Infantry Division, which arrived at that moment at Lodeynoye Pole. Simultaneously with the throw to the Svir, Finnish troops struck

in the central zone of the front and on September 8 occupied the village of Pryazha, thus cutting off the only highway in those places connecting Olonets with Petrozavodsk. In a huge forest

The massif between Yarn and Olonets was surrounded by Soviet troops, whose number Mannerheim estimates at two divisions. IN

In his memoirs he writes:

"... In the following days, the pincers around these divisions were compressed more and more ... At the cost of enormous efforts, the main part managed to get out of the encirclement in separate groups through forests and swamps, leaving all the equipment behind. As in the defeat of the "sack" at Porlampi on the Karelian Isthmus, Russian soldiers even now showed an absolutely incredible ability to endure difficulties and tension, and reports about the battles near Pyhäjärvi spoke vividly to shudder about the torment they experienced, making their way through the dense forests..."

The brilliant success won by the Finnish troops in early September was actually the last. Subsequently, the pace of

advance steadily fell. It took nine days to walk 40 km from Pryazha to Petrozavodsk. The Finnish army has clearly "exploited its resource", and the "offensive impulse" after crossing the border, apparently, has dried up. The soldiers did not understand why and to what extent they needed to go deep into the vast expanses of northern Russia, and since the Finnish troops - let's repeat this again - were more of a "people's militia" than an unreasoning mechanism of a professional army, then cases of disobedience and refusals to continue the offensive ceased to be unique. **According to the Finnish researcher H. Heinil, on the Karelian Isthmus, refusals to cross the border of 1939 occurred in every second infantry regiment (363). Even a single case was recorded (and based only on the recollections of eyewitnesses, and not on any documents) when an officer with the rank of captain appealed to his subordinates not to cross the border. We emphasize once again that all the cases described above took place on the Karelian Isthmus, and it would be very reckless to mechanically transfer these statistics to the situation in the units that fought in Karelia, but a certain general trend emerges quite clearly.**

The hopes of the Finnish command that, by cutting the railway line Lodeynoye Pole - Petrozavodsk, they would be able to deprive the 7th Army of communication with the "big

earth." Literally a few weeks before the start of the third stage of the Finnish offensive, the construction of a 400-kilometer railway line connecting Belomorsk with the Vologda-Arkhangelsk highway was completed. Thus, the "northern transport corridor" (Belomorsk - Medvezhyegorsk - Petrozavodsk) was created, which made it possible to supply the troops of the Karelian Front, albeit in a very long, roundabout way. Fresh 313th and 114th rifle divisions arrived in the 7th Army along the northern highway. Fierce battles for Petrozavodsk continued for two weeks and ended with the capture of the city on October 1, 1941.

Stalin's order to turn the entire abandoned territory into a "scorched earth" zone, formulated by him in his famous radio address on July 3, 1941, was fully extended to Karelia. Moreover, it was there that, due to the relatively slow (slow in comparison with the pace of the advance of the Wehrmacht tank formations) advance of the Finnish troops, this order was carried out in reality. In Petrozavodsk, up to 50% of the housing stock was destroyed, in Kondopoga - 80%; power plants were blown up, sawmills were destroyed; the population, which did not have time or did not want to evacuate, was left without the slightest supply of food. Only the arrival of the Finnish army saved tens of thousands of people from starvation. Which, of course, did not prevent and to this day does not prevent some authors from reading the pages of books and newspapers with lamentations about the "meager rations" and the "inhuman racist policy" of the Finnish invaders ...

October 1941 began, and an early and very severe winter began that year. After the capture of Petrozavodsk, the main efforts of the Finnish army were aimed at mastering Medvezhyegorsk and the inter-lake defile between Segozero and the northern tip of Lake Onega. Fights of "local significance" in the snowy, roadless and deserted region of North Karelia continued until December 6, Medvezhyegorsk changed hands several times. In the end, the Finns occupied the city and the southern section of the Belomoro Baltic Canal. At this, the offensive of the Finnish army was stopped everywhere. On the same day, December 6, 1941, the Finnish parliament adopted a solemn resolution on the reunification of the liberated territories with Finland; territories outside the borders

1939 received the status of a military occupied zone. The Finnish 3rd Army Corps was withdrawn from the operational subordination of the headquarters of the German army "Norway" and returned to Mannerheim's disposal. Even before the end of 1941, the mass demobilization of the Finnish army began. By the spring of 1942, a total of 180,000 people had

returned to peaceful work. As a result of the fighting in Karelia, which lasted a total of almost five months, the Finnish army moved the front line to the line of natural water barriers Segozero - the western shore of Lake Onega - the Svir River - the southern shore of Lake Ladoga. In the eastern part of the Svir River, a bridgehead was created along the southern bank of the river, up to about 15 km deep and up to 100 km wide, which could be used as a "forefield" of the main defensive line. From a military point of view, a huge success was achieved, since instead of the former tortuous border line, which did not have a single serious natural frontier, now only a relatively short front line along the Svir River had to be defended (see Map No. 15). Ultimately, however, the negative political consequences of the invasion of the sovereign territory of the Soviet Union turned out to be much more significant. But in the late autumn of 1941, Helsinki had not yet thought about this ...

The losses of the Finnish army were very high. According to Mannerheim (and according to modern Finnish historians), the losses of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish war exceeded the losses suffered by Finland in the "winter war". Irrecoverable losses amounted to about 27 thousand people: 26 thousand killed and 1 thousand captured. About 80–90 thousand more people were out of action due to injury or illness (all figures should be considered as indicative, in the works of different authors they have a spread of 10–15%). Thus, the total losses are measured in figures of 110-115 **thousand people, which is about 40% of the regular strength of all combat units of the Finnish army**. Without much exaggeration, we can say that the Finnish army crawled to its convincing victory, half-dead from fatigue and losses.

As for the losses of the Red Army, the only reliable figure is **the number of prisoners recorded by the Finnish command: 64,188 people** (28). The exact number of killed and wounded Red Army command of the Finnish army, of course, could not know. Soviet historiography did not know any "2nd Soviet-Finnish war", and the term "continuation war" was known, but only as one of the most vile inventions of the bourgeois falsifiers of history. Accordingly, no separate accounting of losses on the Finnish front was carried out (because there was no "Finnish front", according to Soviet historians, but there was "participation of the Finnish military in Hitler's aggression against the USSR"). In addition, Soviet historiography was reluctant to mention prisoners, so irretrievable losses (killed, prisoners, deserters) were always given in summary form, without being divided into separate components. The fundamental work of a group of Russian military historians ("The

classification has been removed. Losses of the Armed Forces of the USSR") under the leadership of Colonel General Krivosheev contains data on losses in the "Strategic defensive operation in the Arctic and Karelia" (June 29 - October 10). As you can see, the chronological framework does not quite coincide with the actual duration of hostilities (which in northern Karelia ended only in early December); on the other hand, the total number of losses included the losses of the 14th Army, which fought the Germans in the Arctic. The losses of the "army defensive operation on the Karelian Isthmus" are included in the total losses of the troops of the Northern Front in the period from July 10 to August 23 during the "Leningrad defensive operation" (9, pp. 165, 167). Somewhat more informative is the information on the losses

of the fronts (Northern for the entire period of its existence and Karelian in 1941) (9, pp. 232, 250). The numbers of killed and missing are separated, resulting in the ratio of the number of wounded and killed within the standard 1 to 3; chronologically, all periods of the war are included, except for the last, most tragic week of fighting on the Karelian Isthmus (from August 23, the surrounded and defeated formations of the Vyborg group were already considered troops of the Leningrad Front). If conditionally enough (i.e., on the basis of

assumptions about the proportional dependence of the number of losses on the number of divisions of the Northern Front that fought on the "German" and "Finnish" fronts) to assume that the losses of the 14th Army in the Arctic amounted to 25% of the total losses of the Northern Front, then we can come to the following approximate estimate of **losses Red Army in the**

2nd Soviet-Finnish War: - Karelian Front (from August 23 to the end of 1941) 19,317 missing, 43,758 wounded and ill;

- Northern Front (from June 29 to August 23, 1941, excluding the losses of the 14th Army) 17,750 killed, 47,343 missing, 47,178 wounded and sick; - a

total of **32 thousand killed, 67 thousand missing, 91 thousand wounded and sick, total losses - 190 thousand people.**

Most likely, these figures are quite realistic. The fact that the resulting number of missing persons (67,000) is greater than the number of captured (64,000) is not surprising, since, in addition to prisoners, the category of "missing" includes those killed and wounded left on the battlefield during the retreat, and also deserters. For all their inaccuracy, even these very arbitrary figures allow us to draw some very specific conclusions.

First. The total losses (about 190 thousand people) are equal to the number of 13 rifle divisions, fully staffed according to the wartime staffing table. In other words, the 23rd and 7th armies of the Northern Front, as well as the reinforcements they received during the war, were almost completely disabled. And this means that the word "defeat" in the title of this chapter is the only exact definition of what happened in the summer-autumn of 1941 among the forests and lakes of Karelia.

Second. The combat losses (killed and wounded)

of the Finnish and Soviet armies are quite comparable. Due to the conditionality of our assessment of the losses of the Red Army, it makes no sense to give exact arithmetic ratios, but in any case we are talking about values of the same order. And in this the fighting on the Finnish front is radically different from the situation on the "German front", where the enemy's losses were many times less than the losses of the Red Army. The Finnish army did not know how to fight with "little blood" with the Red Army armed at the level of the best world standards (and could not, taking into account

the level of training of the bulk of the personnel, the weakness of artillery, the almost complete absence of tanks and aircraft).

Third. Even on the Finnish front (that is, where the enemy did not have any technical superiority and could not cut the defenses of the Soviet troops with "tank wedges"), the loss of prisoners in the Red Army turned out to be twice the number of those

killed. Fourth. No matter how heavy the losses of the Red Army during the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War, they still turn out to be much less than the losses in the monstrous massacre of the "winter war" (127 thousand killed and forever missing, 232 thousand wounded, frostbitten and sick) (9, pp. 99, 101, 122).

Concluding a brief review of the events of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish war, one cannot fail to mention the fate of the Soviet military base created on the Hanko Peninsula "leased" from

Finland. The real task of the Hanko naval base was to create in advance a springboard for the landing of the Red Army troops 100 km from Helsinki. After the pre-war plans for the invasion of Finland had to be forgotten (and this happened already a week after the start of the war), the continued existence of the Soviet base on Hanko lost any operational meaning. The declared task of the base ("to block the entrance to the Gulf of Finland with artillery fire") remained empty demagoguery: the Hanko naval base did not fire **a single shot at the ships** of the German fleet. For the simplest reason - the Germans were not going to enter their fleet into the Gulf of Finland, and if they had gathered, they would have calmly passed through the southern fairway, outside the zone of destruction of the base artillery. Two Finnish battleships, the same elusive Ilmarinen and Väinämäinen, undertook several night artillery attacks on the Hanko naval base (July 2, 4 and 12, September 2 and November 15). The coastal batteries of the base, having no devices to ensure aimed fire at night, could not provide at least minimal resistance (the torpedo boats of the Baltic Fleet had already left Hanko by that time) (106). The

cadre personnel (about 28 thousand people) who were on Hanko and a huge amount of first-class weapons should have been immediately evacuated already in early July 1941. Looking ahead somewhat, we note that in the end with Hanko in

22.8 thousand soldiers, 26 T-26 tanks, 72 guns of various calibers, 590 machine guns, 22.5 million rifle cartridges, 111 radio stations were delivered to Leningrad. In general, the garrison of Hanko, in its real combat potential, surpassed all the Leningrad divisions of the "people's militia" taken together. In July 1941, a successful evacuation was still possible, since the Red Banner Baltic Fleet had not been expelled from its main base in Tallinn and, accordingly, could provide cover for the evacuation at sea and in the air. By the end of August 1941, the Germans occupied the entire

southern coast of the Gulf of Finland. On August 28, the ill-fated "Tallinn crossing" began, after which the surviving ships moved to Kronstadt, which for the next three years turned into the main base of the Baltic Fleet. After the withdrawal of the fleet from Tallinn and after the loss of all airfields in Estonia, the doomed Hanko naval base found itself in the deep "sea rear" of the enemy, who unconditionally dominated the sea and the air. However, the decision to evacuate Hanko was not made either before the "Tallinn crossing" or after it. Moreover, the Headquarters at least three times (August 13, 14, 21) rejected the corresponding proposals of the Baltic Fleet command. Probably, the Hanko peninsula was dear to Stalin as a memory. As a memory of those unforgettable days of 1939, when, like the khans of the Golden Horde, he called the rulers of neighboring countries to bow to him, dictated his terms to them and drew the borders of the once sovereign states on the map ...

September of the 41st began, and the period of the most fierce fighting began on the southern approaches to Leningrad. The fate of the city hung in the balance, and a large-scale operation was already being prepared to destroy hundreds of industrial and cultural facilities of the "second capital" of the USSR. The garrison of Hanko - of course, not of their own free will - continued the meaningless "sitting", which later Soviet historiography called "the heroic epic of the defense of Hanko."

The Pravda newspaper published pathetic "letters from the defenders of Hanko" with the following content, for example: *"On a harsh rocky peninsula, at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland, stands the indestructible fortress of the Baltic - Red Gangut. For the fifth month we have been defending it from the fascist hordes, not retreating a single step ... "* Former commande

KBF (and later Doctor of Historical Sciences) Admiral Tributs proudly notes in his memoirs that *"despite the difficult conditions of defense, the party organization grew continuously. 4,000 defenders of Hanko joined the Communist Party. More than 1,000 people were accepted into the Komsomol. Some divisions consisted entirely of communists and Komsomol members ... "*

It is difficult to say who "heroically defended" whom from whom. In early July 1941, the Finns really made several attempts to break through to the peninsula, but, having learned from bitter experience of the strength and impregnability of the defense line created on the isthmus, they completely stopped all attempts at assault, reasonably believing that sooner or later, but the Soviet command would be forced to evacuate the base. Coastal defense units and one (!) Swedish volunteer battalion under the command of Lieutenant Colonel H. Berggren were left to "supervise" the 25,000th garrison of the Hanko naval base. After that, the fighting on Hanko was reduced to a systematic exchange of mutual artillery strikes and sabotage attacks on the numerous tiny islands surrounding Hanko. Finally, November came, and a thick

crust of ice began to cover the coastal strip of the Gulf of Finland. It was no longer possible to delay the evacuation of Hanko, since the Finns could have stormed the base "frozen in the ice" by ground forces from those directions where no defensive positions had been built. On November 7, the Headquarters gave permission for the evacuation. Before leaving, the "tenants" were ordered to destroy the property of the "owners" as much as possible.

"... We were sent to the city to break and destroy everything: windows, doors, even furniture in the rooms. It was only impossible to burn anything so that the Finns would not guess that the evacuation had begun. Everything that could not be taken with them was supposed to be spoiled or destroyed. Bags with different cereals - peas, rice, millet, buckwheat were poured into one pile and doused with kerosene, after that there was no need to burn them ... Much on the peninsula was mined. They laid mines on roads and in houses. At the bakery, the last pastries were left on the boards

that pressed the contacts of the explosive charges ... " (189) In fact, partial evacuation began on October 27 and continued on November 3 and 5,

evacuation of the Hanko naval base. The first caravans passed through the Gulf of Finland, literally stuffed with German, Finnish and Soviet mines, quite successfully: without loss of ships and people or with minimal losses. On November 22, 23, 25, 28 the following caravans passed. Losses grew - 728 people died on sunken ships (including the destroyer Sharp-witted). Late in the evening of December 2, the last, largest caravan of ships left Hanko: the Iosif Stalin turboelectric ship, which took on board about 5600 people, two destroyers and six minesweepers. In total, there were more than 8.6 thousand people on all ships. Later, naval specialists pointed out many mistakes made when escorting a caravan through a continuous "palisade" of minefields. Be that as it may, but at 1 o'clock in the morning, in pitch darkness, the ships entered the zone of a dense minefield, presumably German.

Within four minutes, explosions of mines from three minesweepers killed six paravanes (sweeping devices); a strong wind blew a huge transport with high passenger decks away from the swept lane.

At 1:18 a.m., a concussion from a nearby mine explosion disabled the steering control of the transport, the ship began to move in a vicious circle and at 1:22 a.m. it was blown up by the first mine, which destroyed the steering control and the propeller. At 1:26 a.m., the next explosion destroyed the bow of the ship. The uncontrolled vessel was slowly blown away by the wind towards one of the Soviet minefields. Attempts to take the transport in tow were unsuccessful, and at 03:31 there was the next strongest explosion (presumably the detonation of artillery ammunition due to a Soviet mine explosion). Minesweepers stubbornly tried to save the evacuees, but the strong seas did not allow mooring to the sinking ship. People jumped from the "Stalin" into the icy water of the December Baltic and tried to swim to the lifeboats and rafts...

According to the report of the KBF command, by dawn on December 3, 1740 people were removed from the transport. Detachment commander Vice Admiral V.P. The thrush on the destroyer Stoykiy left the disaster area at 2 am and went east to the island of Gogland (Suursaari), where it arrived safely at 14:00 on December 3. Oth

a caravan with survivors arrived at Gogland on the evening of December 3rd. Meanwhile, the Joseph Stalin (Dutch-built in 1940), warped by explosions, was still afloat and slowly drifting towards the Estonian coast. On the morning of December 4, the ship ran aground off the coast, 20 km west of Tallinn. At this moment, the commander of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet apparently remembered the order of the real I. Stalin (Stavka Directive No. 270 of August 16, 1941 "On cases of cowardice and surrender and measures to prevent such actions"), which demanded: "If part of the Red Army *instead of organizing a rebuff to the enemy, they will prefer to surrender - to destroy them by all means, both ground and air.* Admiral Tributs ordered to finish off "Joseph Stalin" with bomber strikes and torpedo boats (106, p. 353). Finish off together with *"units that consisted entirely of communists and Komsomol members."* This order of the admiral (as well as many others) was not carried out - formally due to bad weather and heavy icing of torpedo boats. Hopefully that wasn't the only reason. By noon on December 4, 1941, German and Finnish ships approached the "Stalin" and removed about

4 thousand people from it, who became prisoners of war as a result. In total, during the evacuation of the Hanko naval base, irretrievable losses (dead and captured) amounted to 4987 people. The leader "Leningrad" was damaged and got up for repairs, three destroyers ("Sharp", "Severe" and "Proud"), the patrol ship "Virsaitis", four minesweepers, the hospital ship "Andrei Zhdanov", transport "Joseph Stalin", more than 10 small class vessels (torpedo boats, sea hunters). These losses, comparable to losses in a major naval battle, were **the only practical result** of the creation in the spring of 1940 of the Soviet naval base on the Khanko Peninsula.

Chapter

4.3 Third Attempt

If in the hostilities of the summer - autumn of 1941 the Finnish army won a brilliant victory, then on the "political front" the situation worsened every day. It was impossible to "sit on two chairs" for a long time, especially since these "chairs" had quite distinct interests of their own. Hitler was

absolutely not interested in the promises that Mannerheim gave to someone in 1918, *"swords in sheaths"*, *"dawn rising over the White Sea and Olonets Karelia"* and other prettiness. The Finnish army was expected (and then demanded) to participate in the assault on Leningrad and the offensive from the line of the Svir River to Tikhvin and Volkhov to create a "large encirclement ring" around the Leningrad and Volkhov fronts of the Red Army.

For both the proposals of Ryti and Mannerheim gave the Germans a polite written refusal. On September 4, 1941, A. Jodl, the chief of staff of the operational leadership of the Wehrmacht, arrived at the Mannerheim Headquarters in Mikkeli as a "chief-persuader". He presented Mannerheim with Germany's highest military award, the Knight's Cross (called the "Iron Cross" in Soviet historiography). Mannerheim accepted the order with gratitude, but categorically refused to advance beyond the Svir and jointly with the Germans to storm Leningrad. In November, the commander of the 3rd Army Corps, General Siilasvuo, began to openly sabotage the orders of the headquarters of the German army "Norway" (whose operational subordination was the Finnish corps) to attack the Murmansk railway in the Kestenga - Loukhi strip.

All this could not but cause growing irritation in Berlin, which was accustomed to a completely different style and way of interacting with its satellites. This method is now well known. First, with the help and support of the German special services, an extremist, nationalist organization of a fascist persuasion was created ("Ustashe" in Croatia, "Salashists" in Hungary, "Iron Guard" in Romania, "Glinkovites" in Slovakia), then this

dictatorial power was either directly transferred to the organization, or it was retained as an armed, all-powerful "opposition"; a Hitlerite puppet was placed at the head of a doomed country; the armed forces came under the complete and undisguised control of German officers. And only after the completion of all the "preparatory measures" did the units and formations of the satellite country join - again under the direct and direct command of the Nazi generals - to the next aggressive campaign of Germany. Nothing like this happened in the case of Finland.

The extreme right, pro-fascist "Lapuan movement" was banned and crushed in the early 1930s, its leaders ended up in prison. There was no question of any revival of such organizations in Finland. The country maintained a democratic constitutional system, not allowing even the slightest interference by Germany, the Nazi Party and the SS in the internal affairs of the country. Moreover, the Germans were warned about this in advance: as early as June 3, 1941, during a meeting with German military representatives, the Chief of the Finnish General Staff, Heinrichs, stated that "*an attempt to establish a "quisling-type" government in Finland would immediately put an end to German-Finnish cooperation*" (65, p. 167). By the way, about Quisling (the head of the puppet "government" of occupied Norway, was executed on October 23, 1945 for cooperation with the Nazis by court verdict) - Finland continued to maintain diplomatic relations with the legitimate government of Norway in exile, and the Norwegian ambassador was in Helsinki. In order to appreciate this situation, one should remember that in May 1941, the Soviet Union, demonstrating loyalty to Berlin, broke off diplomatic relations and expelled the Norwegian embassy from Moscow.

On the other hand, the Germans could not but recognize the fact that the Finnish army was fighting very successfully against the Red Army, while the Romanian and Slovak units turned out to be suitable only for robberies and punitive raids on partisan areas, and the Italian divisions (named instead of "normal » numbers with the names of the heroes of ancient antiquity) turned out to be generally useless. As a result, Germany continued to provide signs

attention and assistance both to Mannerheim personally and to Finland as a whole. So, already at the end of October 1941, the Finnish economy was in a state of such an acute crisis that the Finns were forced to ask Germany for 175 thousand tons of grain, without which the country's population simply would not have survived until the next harvest, 150 locomotives and at least 4 thousand wagons for a transport system that was on the brink of disaster. On November 21, Keitel promised to boost grain deliveries, to deliver 55 steam locomotives and 900 wagons by sea, while recalling that due to the lack of "land contact" (i.e., Mannerheim's refusal to advance from the Svir River to Tikhvin), larger-scale deliveries are technically impossible (65, p. 258). With each passing day, Finland's relations with its former Western allies worsened. And in this case, the pressure came from two sides at once. The

Germans (not without reason) were outraged that in the capital of the state to which they had provided and continue to provide such valuable assistance, there were embassies of the main opponents of Germany. Already on July 9, 1941, Ribbentrop demanded a severance of diplomatic relations between Finland and Great Britain (the United States at that time was not officially at war against Germany, respectively, Ribbentrop had no formal grounds for demanding a severance of diplomatic relations with America). On July 22, the Finns responded to this demand with a vague promise to *"conduct appropriate negotiations and, if necessary, break off diplomatic relations with Great Britain."* The situation escalated by itself after on July 30 carrier-based attack aircraft from the British aircraft carrier *Furies* attacked German ships in the Norwegian port of Kirkenes and Finnish Petsamo. And although the targets were German military installations in the far north of Finland, which was actually controlled by German troops, this episode allowed the Finnish government to comply with Berlin's demand without "losing face" and without needlessly exacerbating relations with England. The Finnish embassy was withdrawn from London, the British responded in the same way, but further process

did not go.

On the other hand, Comrade Stalin, who instantly got used to his new (and frankly, completely unexpected for him)

the role of "participant in the anti-Hitler coalition of democratic countries", began more and more insistently - no, not to ask, but to demand from Churchill and Roosevelt more and more concessions, gifts, etc.

Already on July 18, Stalin, in a letter to Churchill, proposed the creation of a new front against Hitler in northern Europe. This meant the active operations of the British air and naval forces, as well as the landing in northern Norway of one British division or "Norwegian volunteers for insurrectionary operations against the Germans." It is possible that the air raid on Kirkenes and Petsamo, which served as the reason for the termination of diplomatic relations between Finland and England, was organized in response to Stalin's demand. As for Stalin's

constant demands to declare war on Finland, London and Washington could relatively calmly ignore them only until Finnish troops crossed the 1939 border. Neither England nor the United States ever recognized

Stalin's conquests in Europe in 1939-1940 as legal, the aggression against Finland was officially condemned by the League of Nations, President Roosevelt, as is known, issued in December 1939 the demands of a "moral embargo" (a ban on the supply of aviation and aircraft engines) on the USSR, so that the Allies were not going to demand from Finland compliance with the terms of the predatory Moscow Peace Treaty of March 12, 1940. Not the last role was played by the fact that the Soviet bombings of June 25–26, 1941 and their consequences were seen by British and American diplomats with their own eyes. The situation began to change after, in September 1941, the Finnish army advanced tens and then hundreds of kilometers deep into the sovereign territory of the USSR.

On September 22, 1941, Finland received an official note from the British government, which contained a demand for the withdrawal of Finnish troops to the 1939 border line and a warning that in the event of further advance into Russia, "the British government will be forced to recognize Finland as an enemy as in the course of the *war as well as at the conclusion of peace*. From September 29 to October 1, 1941, negotiations were held in Moscow, at

which an agreement was reached on the Anglo-American deliveries of weapons, military materials and food to the Soviet Union. One of the shortest "transport corridors" passed through the waters of the North Atlantic and the Barents Sea to the ports of Murmansk and Arkhangelsk. From that moment on, America could no longer look indifferently at the course of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish war. On October 27, 1941, the US government sent an official note to President Ryti, where, along with the demand for the withdrawal of troops to the 1939 border, it was stated that "*if ships carrying military supplies sent by the United States to the north of the Soviet Union are openly or covertly attacked from territory under Finnish control, then such an incident will cause an immediate crisis in relations between Finland and the United States*" (65, p. 228). Finally, on

November 28, 1941, the Finnish government received an English ultimatum, in which a specific day was named - December 5, 1941, after which Finland was to "*stop military operations and refrain from participating in any hostile (in relation to the USSR and Great Britain) actions.*" If this ultimatum was not carried out, Finland would be at war with England. The next day, November 29, 1941, the US Ambassador to Finland gave Mannerheim a personal message from W. Churchill: "*... I am very upset by what, in my opinion, awaits us in the future, namely,*

*that we are **due to loyalty** (underlined by me. – M.S.) are forced to declare war on Finland in a few days... I hope that I am able to convince Your Excellency that we will defeat the Nazis. For many of your country's English friends, it would be a shame if Finland ended up on the same bench as the accused and defeated Nazis.*

Remembering our pleasant conversations and exchange of letters concerning the last war, I feel the need to send you a purely personal and confidential message for reflection before it's too late" (22, p. 404). The explanation given in Mannerheim's memoirs of the reasons why Finland rejected the demands of the British government does not look very convincing.

At a government meeting, it was allegedly decided to agree with the demands of London, especially since

the withdrawal of troops to the 1939 border was not discussed in them. The unwillingness to communicate their consent (until the fighting near Medvezhyegorsk was fully completed) was allegedly due to fears that the British would pass this information on to Moscow. Be that as it may, but on December 6, 1941, on the next anniversary of the declaration of independence of Finland and on the day of the end of hostilities on the Soviet-Finnish front, England declared war on it. The United States, much less bound in its decisions by "reasons of loyalty" to Stalin, was quite content with the virtual cessation of hostilities and the absence of any attempt by the Finnish army to cut the Murmansk-Belomorsk railway line. As a result, neither a declaration of war nor a break in diplomatic relations with Finland ever happened.

The year 1942 began with a counter-offensive of the Red Army near the walls of Moscow and ended with the encirclement of German, Romanian and Italian troops near Stalingrad. In January 1943, the Red Army was finally able to break through the German defenses in the area of Shlisselburg, and between the besieged Leningrad and the "mainland" a narrow, 10-kilometer, artillery-shootable, but still really functioning "transport corridor" appeared. This meant that the most terrible chapter in the history of the siege of Leningrad was over. On February 2, 1943, the grandiose battle at Stalingrad ended in complete defeat and the capture of the remnants of the enemy armies. The next day, February 3, 1943, a meeting of the Higher Finland was held at the headquarters of the Finnish army in Mikkeli. The leaders were forced to come to a completely disappointing conclusion: Germany would inevitably lose this war, and Finland military-political that she would have to pay for the fact made a mistake in choosing an ally. Practical proposals boiled down to the fact that it was necessary to look for a way for Finland to get out of the war as soon as possible, in which it would be possible to preserve its sovereignty and state independence.

The task, which was very difficult - and turned out to be practically unresolved at the end of 1941 - seemed practically impossible in the new situation. Finnish society and the Finnish parliament were not yet ready to recognize all the victims of the two wars

in vain and agree to a withdrawal to the 1940 border line. Stalin, intoxicated by the outstanding successes of the Red Army, no longer agreed to a simple restoration of the pre-war "status quo". Secret contacts between Soviet and Finnish representatives that took place during 1942-1943. in the capitals of neutral states, have shown that there is no ground for a compromise agreement. Moreover, as expected, the Germans became aware of these contacts, which resulted in a demonstrative recall of the German ambassador from Helsinki and a temporary cessation of food supplies in early June 1943. A ray of hope dawned in

Lisbon, where in the summer of 1943 through the US Embassy secret negotiations took place in Portugal, at which the possibility of landing American troops in northern Scandinavia was discussed. As a result, the Minister

of Foreign Affairs of Finland, in agreement with Mannerheim, sent a letter to the US State Department with an assurance that the Finnish army would not interfere with the appearance of American troops in Finland. The appearance of a real "third force" capable of ensuring a peaceful exit of Finland from the war could completely change the hopeless situation for the Finns, but the plans for the Allied landings in Scandinavia remained on paper. From November 29 to December 2, Tehran hosted the

first meeting of the leaders of the three allied powers: Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt. To the message of the Western allies that Finland was ready to liberate Eastern Karelia and Olonets (i.e., withdraw to the 1939 border line), Stalin replied with a short remark: "Finland does not want serious negotiations with the Soviet Union." For Stalin, the internationally recognized border of 1939 had already ceased to be a subject worth mentioning. In the end, Stalin verbally promised to show generosity and find, on the basis of a return to the 1940 borders, a solution to the problem that would preserve the independence of Finland. At the level of binding decisions of the Tehran Conference, it was decided - and the Finnish leadership was informed about this through the Soviet Ambassador to Sweden - not to apply to Finland the requirement of "complete and unconditional surrender", which demand future

the victors agreed to regard it as the only possible form of ending the war with Germany and its allies. It is possible

that Roosevelt also made certain promises to Stalin on the "Finnish question." On January 30, 1944, the government of Finland received an official note from the United States, which stated that the longer Finland delayed the conclusion of a peace treaty with the USSR, the more unfavorable the terms of this treaty would be for her. On the same days, at the airfields of the Leningrad and Novgorod regions, recently liberated from the German occupiers, the last preparations were being completed for the largest ever war (not the Soviet-Finnish, but World War II) air operation of the Soviet Air Force. Preparations for this operation began as early as

December 1943, immediately after the completion of the Tehran Conference. The quite obvious task - to put pressure on the Finnish leadership, to demonstrate to him the immeasurably increased military power of the Soviet Union, was perhaps not the only one. Stalin's ambitions required demonstrating to the West that Soviet strategic aviation was also capable of inflicting crushing blows, turning entire cities into dust and ashes. The capital of Finland, with its weak and outdated air defense system, seemed like an ideal target for such a demonstration. Almost all long-range aviation (ADD) of the Soviet Union was involved in the multi-day operation. Gone are the instructions to "bomb in small groups of separate units". At equal intervals of 10 days, it was planned to deliver three powerful strikes, in which all combat-ready aircraft were to take part simultaneously. And these aircraft were no longer light "high-speed" SBs with a bomb load of six FAB-100s, but long-range DB-3fs, American Mitchels B-25s, and American Soviet-made Douglasses ("Li-2") and heavy four-engine "flying fortresses" "Pe-8", capable of lifting the "FAB-2000" or even "FAB-5000".

The first raid took place on the night of February 6-7. Of the 785 bombers that took off, **728 aircraft reached their target, dropping 6,991 bombs on Helsinki with a total weight of 924 tons.** Nearly one kiloton. Among other things

two FAB-5000s were dropped on the capital of Finland (one such bomb could demolish an entire block), six FAB-2000s and four FAB-1000s. The report of the Karelian Front Air Force headquarters the next day read: *"Fighter air reconnaissance carried out at 14:05 found that the entire city remained in smoke ..."* (52, pp. 322-324) In the second raid, which

took place on the night of 16 on February 17, "only" 408 (according to other sources - 497) aircraft took part, which dropped 4317 bombs on the city. The most powerful was the third raid (on the night of February 26-27), in which **929 bombers took part, of which 863 reached the target.** 5182 bombs were dropped with a total weight of 1010 tons. A characteristic feature of this raid was the massive use of heavy and super-heavy bombs: 20 FAB-2000, 621 FAB-500, 1431 FAB-250. A total of **16,490 high-explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped on Helsinki, with a combined weight of 2,575 tons.** We emphasize once again that this was the largest operation of the Soviet ADD in all the years of the war. And not just the "largest", and not going to any comparison with the famous raids on Berlin described in hundreds of publications carried out at the end of the summer of 1941. Then the Baltic Fleet Air Force dropped 311 bombs on Berlin in the period from August 8 to September 5 weighing 36 tons. The

February bombings of Helsinki had manifold, mostly unexpected consequences. When in September 1944

(already after the signing of the Armistice Agreement) representatives of the Soviet military command were able to arrive in Helsinki, instead of a pile of charred ruins, they, to their extreme surprise, found a city full of life. Emotional impressions are fully confirmed by the now known figures and facts. According to the report of the Finnish Air Defense Commander, presented on February 7 to Mannerheim's Headquarters, as a result of the first raid, 64 stone houses were destroyed and damaged within the city, 29 stone and 330 wooden buildings were destroyed or burned down in the suburbs. 83 people died, 322 were injured. Two cargo ships and one patrol boat were destroyed in the port of Helsinki (52, p. 322). Victims and destruction, as we see

significant, but in no way corresponding to the expected result from the release of 7 thousand bombs with a total weight

of almost a kiloton. According to Finnish aviation historian K-F. Geusta in the "populated areas of the city" only 799 bombs fell, which, as you can easily see, is only 4.8% of the total number of bombs dropped during the three raids or 8.5% of the total number of high-explosive bombs (the fact that each incendiary bomb did not fall could always be fixed separately). Where did the rest fall, that is, 15,000 bombs? To port facilities and industrial enterprises in the suburbs of Helsinki? Maybe. But the loss (in total) of three boats and two cargo ships casts doubt on this as well. The same K-F. Geust hypothesizes: *"The use of radar-guided anti-aircraft fire and pre-calculated barrage patterns caused most of the attacking aircraft to turn away from the city and drop their bombs into the sea."* This, of course, is just the opinion of one historian, and therefore questions remain. Perhaps these questions were also asked to the Chief Marshal of Aviation, the commander of the ADD, comrade A.E. Golovanov. One thing is indisputable - at the end of 1944, the ADD was disbanded, and on this, Golovanov's enchanting career (he became a marshal at the age of 39, having gone from the commander of a bomber regiment to the post of commander of the ADD in just 10 months) stopped (it was irretrievably cut short only after Stalin's death). In general, the February ("peaceful", as they were called in Finland) bombardments were not powerful enough to

break the will of the Finns to resist, but quite convincing for those who still hoped for the possibility of concluding an "honorable peace". On February 12, 1941, the Finnish government sent Yu-K. Paasikivi (the former ambassador to Moscow and a constant supporter of the policy of concessions and "appeasement" of Stalin) to Stockholm to meet with the Soviet ambassador to Sweden. On February 23, Paasikivi returned with the following "package" of peace terms: - the 1940 border; - transfer of the port and the region of the nickel mines of Petsamo to the Soviet Union;

- disarmament and internment of German troops located in Finland;
- demobilization of the Finnish army to the size of the pre-war peacetime army;
- compensation for military losses of the Soviet Union;
- release and return of prisoners of war to their homeland.

It is noteworthy that the authors of the classic Soviet 12-volume "History of the Second World War" did not find a place in 12 volumes to list these requirements, limiting themselves only to the following passage: "The Soviet Union set out peace conditions that were regarded in many countries as quite moderate and acceptable . *However, the Finnish side replied that they did not suit her*" (365). The

discussion of Moscow's demands at a meeting with the President of Finland began on the evening of February 26, 1944. A massive Soviet air raid only accelerated the adoption of a negative decision. If the Finnish leaders had already come to terms with the inevitability of a return to the borders of 1940, then the demands for the internment of German troops, the payment of reparations and the abandonment of Petsamo seemed at that time equally impossible and unacceptable. On March 8, a refusal to accept such conditions was conveyed through the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, but at the same time a desire was expressed to start direct negotiations with the USSR. On March 10 and 19, again through Ambassador A.M. Kollontai received the following answer: *"The Soviet terms of the armistice with Finland in the form of six points handed over to Mr. Paasikivi on February 19 are minimal and elementary, and only if these terms are accepted by the Finnish government are Soviet-Finnish negotiations possible..."* (364) Nevertheless The Soviet government agreed to the arrival of the Finnish delegation to

Moscow. Almost simultaneously, on March 13 and 16, US Secretary of State K. Hull, and then President F. Roosevelt, publicly announced that Finland should withdraw from the war. Thus, the Finnish government was absolutely unequivocally recommended to agree to the existing peace conditions before they got even worse.

And they could only get worse, because after the final defeat of Nazi Germany, Stalin, on the one hand, would no longer need the help of the allies, and therefore restrain his appetites in accordance with their recommendations, on the other hand, he would be able to concentrate on the Finnish front an overwhelming military power.

Unfortunately, this simple logic was not recognized in time by the Finnish leadership. Negotiations in Moscow between Paasikivi and Foreign Minister Enckel on March 27–29 ended in complete failure. Molotov insisted on "six points" and specified two of them: the expulsion and / or internment of German troops in Finland was to be completed by the end of April, and the amount of reparations was determined at 600 million dollars.

In order to appreciate this astronomical figure, it is enough to recall that the famous American (four-engine strategic "flying fortress" thousand dollars. After a B-17 bomber) cost "only" 200-250 two-week discussion, the Government and Parliament of Finland unanimously reached a decision, which on April 19 was transmitted to Moscow through Ambassador Kollontai: *to exist as an independent state...*" (364) **It was a mistake, and, as subsequent events showed, a very costly mistake.** Moscow received an additional propaganda "trump card", which it did not fail to use. On April 22, a press conference was held at the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR, at which Deputy

People's Commissar Vyshinsky spoke. It was an example of demagoguery, worthy of both Comrade Vyshinsky himself and his Boss: *"... The Finnish government in its relations with the German fascists has gone so far that it can no longer, and does not want to, break with them. It placed its country at the service of the interests of Nazi Germany. The current Finnish government does not want to expel German troops from Finland. It does not want the restoration of peaceful relations. It prefers to leave its country in the vassalage of Nazi Germany ... "* (364)

From this speech, it could be understood that only love for Hitler and the desire to "serve the interests of Germany" forced the Finnish government to reject the disinterested proposals of the Soviet Union to "restore peaceful relations." And the persistent and harsh criticism of the "current Finnish government" gave reason to assume that Stalin would like to see (and even better, bring) another, "correct" government to Helsinki.

On the other hand, such a wide publicity of the ongoing negotiations led to an acute crisis in German-Finnish relations. In mid-March, the delivery of another batch of weapons was delayed, on April 13 Germany stopped sending grain, **and on March 18 a full embargo was introduced.** In the last days of March, the Chief of the Finnish General Staff was invited to come "to exchange information" at the German Headquarters. As Mannerheim writes in his memoirs, *"the tone of Keitel's speech was such that General Heinrichs stood up and offered to continue the conversation in private."* Things did not come to assault at the general level, but the position of the German command remained uncompromising: the supply of grain and weapons can be resumed only if Finland gives official and public guarantees that it will not make peace with the USSR.

If for Finland March 1944 was a month of tragic mistakes, then Stalin could rightfully be proud of his Jesuit cunning. Never before had his actions "in the Finnish direction" been so successful. He demonstrated to his hated Western allies a benevolent readiness to take into account their opinions and wishes, even on a question concerning primarily the interests of the USSR. He demonstrated to the allies and the whole world the fact of the negotiations and the arrogant refusal of the "current Finnish government to restore peaceful relations." Finally, Stalin was simply lucky - in Helsinki they clearly overestimated their strength and just as clearly underestimated the seriousness of Moscow's intentions. Now it remains only to wait for the optimal moment for the "final solution of the Finnish question." And the fact that such a moment would definitely come, Stalin - on the basis of the decisions of the Tehran Conference - knew perfectly well.

At dawn on June 6, 1944, the largest landing operation in world history began - the landing of allied forces in Normandy. The scale of events exceeded everything that the most ardent imagination could previously imagine. 1200 warships, 4126 landing barges, 864 transport ships moved across the English Channel. On June 6, Allied aviation carried out 14,000 sorties. By evening, more than 156 thousand people had been landed on the coast - from the sea and from the air. Two floating ports were towed to the captured bridgeheads, a gasoline pipeline was laid along the bottom of the English Channel, supplying fuel to hundreds, and then thousands of Anglo-American tanks, armored personnel carriers, and self-propelled guns. On the eve of D-Day, Allied strategic aviation destroyed all bridges on the Seine and Loire rivers, thus depriving the German command of the opportunity to transfer tank divisions to the landing area. The

whole world, with bated breath, was waiting for the outcome of the grandiose battle... On June 9, 1944, the roar of an unprecedented artillery cannonade announced the beginning of the offensive of the Red Army on the Karelian Isthmus. Mannerheim writes that the thunder of Soviet guns was clearly audible at his Headquarters in Mikkeli, that is, 200 km from the front line. 3.5 thousand guns, supported by a bombing strike by aviation, which carried out 1150 sorties on June 9, literally wiped out the front line of defense of the Finnish army from the face of the earth. Then, an avalanche of infantry and tanks poured into the gap formed on a narrow 15-km coastal section. Even in uniform (epaulettes instead of Red Army buttonholes), the advancing army did not look like the one that in December 1939, with rifles at the ready, launched an attack on the Mannerheim Line. The new Red Army, having grown new command personnel over the course of three years of a terrible war, re-equipped with new, in many ways the best in the world, Soviet and American weapons, hardened in battles

and confident in its invincible power, set off on another "furious campaign". On the new strip of fortifications, built at some distance from the front line, frozen in September 1941, the Finns deployed 5 infantry divisions (2, 3, 10, 15, 18) and two brigades in two echelons. According to official Soviet data, the 21st and 23rd Armies of the Leningrad Front launched the "Vyborg Offensive" consisting of 15 rifle divisions (9

Thus, the superiority in the number of infantry was "only" 3-fold. And these are really modest figures - if we compare them with the final stage of the "winter war". The new Red Army hoped to solve the task set not by "filling up with corpses", but by resolutely massing tanks, artillery and strike aircraft in the directions of the main attack.

At the beginning of the offensive on the Karelian Isthmus, one (30th Guards) tank brigade and 10 separate tank and self-propelled artillery regiments (a total of about 300 armored vehicles) operated. By the end of the

month, four tank brigades (30, 1, 152, 220) and 15 separate regiments were already participating in the battle. The absence of large tank formations (corps and tank armies) was another characteristic feature of the Vyborg Offensive Operation, testifying precisely to the increased operational skill of the Soviet command. The conditions of the terrain covered with forests, lakes and swamps did not allow for deep tank breakthroughs, so the armored vehicles were distributed in separate units among rifle formations, the number of which increased to 28 divisions by the end of June.

The quantitative superiority of Soviet aviation was simply overwhelming. The 13th Air Army, reinforced by the 113th and 334th bomber divisions, as well as the 2nd Guards Air Defense Fighter Corps, had 489 fighters, 346 Il-2 attack aircraft, 288 bombers (Il-4, "Pe-2", "Tu-2"). In addition, units of the KBF Air Force (about 200-220 combat aircraft) were transferred to the operational subordination of the command of the 13th Air Army. In the first days of the operation, only three fighter groups could cover the Finnish units from the air (14 Messerschmitts Bf-109G from LLv-24 at the Suulajärvi airfield, 18 Brewsters from LLv-26 at the Heinioki airfield, 16 Messerschmitts from LLv -34 at Kotka airfield) with a total of 48 fighters (52, p. 336). Later, almost the entire bomber aircraft of the Finnish Air Force, with a total

number of 66 aircraft, took part in the battles on the Karelian Isthmus.

In the first week of the operation, the offensive developed exceptionally successfully. The 10th Finnish Infantry Division, which found itself in the direction of the main attack of the Soviet troops, was swept away and thrown back 10–15 km from the front line. As Mannerheim writes, *“The 10th division, which fought near the Gulf of Finland, lost most of its artillery. On June 11, her dispersed units were taken to the Vammelsuu-Taipale line for replenishment and reorganization.* Neither such events, nor such expressions (“scattered units”) were previously encountered in the memoirs of the Marshal of Finland. Within two or three days, units of the 21st Army reached the main line of Finnish fortifications and on the morning of June 14 broke through it near the village of Kuuturselkya. To eliminate the breakthrough, Mannerheim sent his main reserve - the only armored division in the Finnish army, which at that time was commanded by the

illustrious General Lagus. There were quite a lot of armored vehicles in the Lagus division (about 120 units), but mostly they were captured Soviet light tanks captured during the Finnish offensive of 1941 or even during the "winter war". The only real force was a battalion armed with German "assault guns" "Stug-40".

On June 14–16, a unique tank battle unfolded in the south of the Karelian Isthmus, in which “hopelessly outdated” (according to Soviet historians) by the summer of 1941, Soviet tanks “T-26” and “T-28” tried to fight against the “T-34” of the latest modifications and heavy self-propelled guns “ISU-152”, the armament and armor of which theoretically made it possible to resist the German “Tigers”. By the morning of June 15, the Finns managed to close the “gap” in the defense formed at Kuuturselk, but this could no longer change the overall situation, which was very close to disaster. On June 16 (on the seventh day of the Soviet offensive), Mannerheim was forced to order a general withdrawal to Vyborg and Vuosalmi, 50–80 km from the collapsed defensive line. The retreat took place in an environment that the commander-in-chief himself describes in his memoirs as follows: *“Powerful enemy columns advanced in the north-western direction. Before them were only the remnants of the defeated troops, the will*

which to fight due to the superiority of the enemy in force was undermined ... ”

At this moment,

the command of the Leningrad Front made the first mistake in a row. Instead of developing the maximum pace of pursuit and cutting off the retreating Finnish infantry from the only (!) Bridge across the Vuoksi River (such a maneuver would force the Finns to leave most of the heavy weapons on the western bank of the river), an avalanche of Soviet troops rushed along the coastal highway to Vyborg. The capture of this largest city on the Karelian Isthmus took place already on June 20 (on the 11th day of the offensive!) And was marked by an artillery salute in Moscow and the assignment to the commander of the Leningrad Front, L.A. marshal's speech

ranks.

“The fall of Vyborg,” writes Mannerheim, *“ was a bitter blow to the morale of the troops and at the same time meant the loss of a strong stronghold that should have tied significant enemy forces with stubborn defense.”* And yet, something else was much more important - the Finnish troops were able to retreat in an organized manner to a new defensive line formed by a natural barrier created by the lake river Vuoksi, and an unfinished line of fortifications between Vyborg and st. Antrea. The second - and incomparably more significant in its consequences -

mistake of the Soviet command was that the offensive of the troops of the Karelian Front began only on June 21, 1944. In Soviet historiography, this is a strange mismatch in the actions of the two fronts within the framework of one strategic operation (however, a single Petrozavodsk "this operation could become later, already in the writings of Soviet military historians) has never been commented on in any way. The operational directives of the headquarters of the Leningrad Front stored in the archives also do not contain any mention of the planned interaction with the Karelian Front. Of course, this can be considered a “mistake” only on the assumption that the offensive from the river. Svir to Petrozavodsk was generally planned in advance. It is possible that Stalin hoped to defeat the Finnish army with an offensive on the Karelian Isthmus and further into the depths of southern Finland, after which Karelia would itself “fall into

his hands." At least this is the version of what happened Mannerheim expresses:

"Perhaps the Russians expected from the very beginning that only a powerful group of troops concentrated on the Karelian Isthmus would force us to surrender. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain the fact that, having launched an offensive there, they gave us a twelve-day respite on the Svir front and the Maselka isthmus, during which we were able to transfer four divisions and one brigade from there to the Karelian Isthmus. The fact that the enemy could not effectively tie up our troops in Eastern Karelia, as well as prevent the regrouping of our forces with the help of aviation, played a decisive role in the battle on the isthmus ..." Ultimately 4th, 17th, then 11th and 6th The 1st infantry divisions of the Finnish

army were transferred by rail to the Karelian Isthmus, which allowed the Finnish command to carry out a somewhat organized withdrawal and condense the battle formations of troops on the new line of defense.

As if on command (or in fact - on command?), Soviet historians ended their account of the hostilities on the Karelian Isthmus with the capture of Vyborg. After that, the Finns allegedly "asked for peace", to which the invariably peaceful Soviet government happily agreed. These traditions of fully conscious disinformation have continued to this day: in the most authoritative collection "Secrecy Removed", the time frame of the "Vyborg-Petrozavodsk strategic operation" is indicated from June 10 to August 9, but data on the losses of troops of the Leningrad Front are given only for the period from 10 to 20 June (9, p. 201). So what happened from June 20 to August 9? The Soviet government patiently waited until "the defeated White Finns sue for peace," and not a single soldier died in the troops of the Leningrad Front during this time? If only... With the capture of Vyborg, everything was just

beginning. In the evening (at 23:30) on June 21, the Operational Directive of the Leningrad Front Headquarters No. 74 / op was signed, in which the front troops were ordered:

*"... continue the offensive with the task of **capturing the line of Imatra, Lappeenranta, Virojoki** no later than 26.6.44 with the main forces (emphasized by me. - M.S.). At the same time, to clear the Karelian Isthmus from the enemy northeast of the Vuoksi River and Lake by the offensive of part of the forces on Hiitola-Kexholm ... "* (365)

There is not a single mention in the multipage directive that after reaching the Imatra-Lappeenranta line (that is, FOR THE 1940 border line), the troops were to stop and go on the defensive. In fact, reaching this line was designated only as a task for the next (after the capture of Vyborg) week! Interesting, although not quite concretized information is also found in the memoirs of Colonel General M.M. Popov. In April 1944, he returned to "his" Leningrad front, this time as chief of staff of the front. General Popov, in a soldierly way, writes directly:

*"The objective of the operation was the destruction of the main forces of the Finnish troops on the Karelian Isthmus and the exit of our troops north-west and west of Vyborg in order to create a threat to the **most important vital centers of Finland in the south of the country** (hereinafter, it is emphasized by me - M.S.) ... June 21 1944. The Stavka ordered the Leningrad Front to continue its offensive on the isthmus **to invade deep into Finland**" (194,*

pp. 61, 73). Some idea of the depth of this "invasion in depth" is given by the Order (b / n), which on June 20, 1944 M.M. Popov signed. The order of the headquarters of the Leningrad Front was addressed to the commander of the 13th Air Army, which was given the following task:

"1. Carry out an areal aerial survey ... of the Kouvola, Kotka, Lappeenranta section ...

3. Complete the survey of the indicated area no later than June 26, 1944. 4. Report on the progress of surveying

daily" (370). At this point, the Finns really "asked for peace." On June 22, 1944, the Finnish ambassador in Stockholm, Gripenberg, through the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, addressed Moscow with an inquiry regarding the conditions for Finland's withdrawal from the war. The next day, June 23, Kollontai transmitted the following reply from the Soviet government:

“... Since we were several times deceived by the Finns, we would like to receive from the Finnish government an official statement signed by the Prime Minister or Minister of Foreign Affairs that Finland capitulates and asks for peace from the USSR. If we receive such a document from the Finnish government, Moscow will agree to receive a delegation from the Finnish government...” (364, p. 121) These few

phrases had serious consequences and have a long history of interpretation. The question is really difficult, since the phrase is composed (intentionally or in vehemence) in a very ambiguous way. If a certain country X capitulates to an armed adversary, then no negotiations with its representatives are already possible, because capitulation means, in the language of jurisprudence, "loss of legal personality." Country X ceases to be a subject of international law and puts itself "at the mercy of the winner" - this is what the term "complete and unconditional surrender" means. After that, there is no need to invite a delegation for negotiations, and it is impossible, because this delegation will be a representative of the non-existent government of the disappeared country. It would have been more natural to sign the Act of Surrender of Finland in Helsinki than in Moscow. On the other hand, even minor officials of the NKID of the USSR perfectly understood the meaning of the term "surrender", and it could not be used in the official statement of the Soviet government "just like that", for the "beauty of the style" alone.

Such close attention of historians to three words (“surrender” and “accept a delegation”) is explained very simply: it is one thing to deceive the “White Finnish servants of German fascism” and quite another to deceive your allies in the anti-Hitler coalition. And since Comrade Stalin gave a promise in Tehran **not to demand surrender to Finland**, comrade Soviet historians were forced to rise to the heights of eloquence in order to prove the possibility of partial pregnancy and incomplete surrender. In the presentation of the leading specialist in the history of the Soviet-Finnish wars, Leningrad professor N.I. Baryshnikov, it sounds like this:

"Under these conditions, it would have been logical that an immediate response from Moscow would have followed that Finland should send an appeal to the government of the USSR on surrender, in order to then decide on the issue of peace with the Soviet Union. At the same time, the Plenipotentiary of the USSR in Sweden A.M. Kollontai, who transmitted this answer, explained on her own behalf that capitulation should be understood as the cessation of hostilities on the Finnish side in order to then reach an

appropriate agreement ... " (367, p. 381) Every word here is "yakhont emerald". *"The immediate response"* was. He couldn't "be". They don't speak (let alone write) this way in Russian. What other *"question about peace"* could be solved AFTER the *"appeal to the government of the USSR about surrender"*? Finally, how should one understand *"the cessation of hostilities on the Finnish side"*, while the other, Soviet, side is conducting these same military operations with the forces of 28 divisions, 4 tank brigades and 15 separate tank regiments? How might this amazing unilateral cessation of hostilities during a

war look like in practice? All this would have been funny - but the Finns were not in the mood for jokes, because with all the tongue-tied form of presentation, the meaning of the Soviet ultimatum was extremely clear. Finland was asked to surrender to the mercy of the winner, but all previous experience showed that there would be no mercy. There was only one thing left

- practically on the battlefield to prove to the "winner" that he had not yet won. And on the battlefield, the situation began to change rapidly. The brilliantly organized and launched offensive of the Soviet troops began to gradually fizzle out. On the other hand, Germany provided its dying ally with prompt and effective assistance. On June 13, all restrictions on the supply of grain and weapons to Finland were lifted. On June 19, torpedo boats delivered 9,000 Faustpatrons (hand-held anti-tank grenade launchers) to Finland. Three days later, another 5,000 were delivered by plane. The sudden and massive use of this new weapon for that era gave an effect of operational scale. Prior to this, the Finnish infantry turned out to be practically unarmed, since the small-caliber anti-tank "Marianna" and "Bofors" were only capable of striking sparks from the armor of new Soviet tanks and self-propelled guns. WIT

the appearance, and the appearance of many thousands of anti-tank grenade launchers, the Finnish soldier again felt like a fighter on the battlefield, and not a victim brought to the scaffold to the executioner. Mannerheim writes:

"... I remember one incident that was really a turning point. When Russian tanks appeared on the site near Leipyasuo, several fearless warriors from the 4th division, among them both commanders and privates, resolutely moved towards the steel monsters and with several aimed shots from the "armored fist" deprived the first of them of the opportunity to move. The rest [tanks] immediately turned and fled. From that day on, the faith of the troops in the new weapons grew stronger. The depressed mood within a few days was replaced by trust, and again there was a desire to fight. This complete change of mood had a decisive influence on the fact that the enemy's offensive was finally stopped ... " (22, p. 475) Of course, the "Faustpatron" was not a miracle weapon, and ways were quickly found (and very simple and cheap) to protect tanks from being hit by

cumulative hand grenade launchers, but for several days and weeks the new weapon made it possible to win, which in the situation of June 44 meant a lot. Until the end of June 1944, the Finns received 39 Messerschmitt Bf-109 G-6 fighters, in July - another 19 vehicles. This made it possible not only to make up for combat losses, but also to re-

equip several squadrons with the latest technology. The problem of mastering new types of aircraft by flight personnel (a

favorite topic of Russian historians when they begin to list the "objective" reasons for the defeat of Soviet aviation in the first weeks of the war) was solved in the Finnish Air Force very simply. 4 hours of training flights were allotted for mastering the Messerschmitt even in the relatively "peaceful" year of 1943 (52, p. 301). With the beginning of active hostilities, retraining was reduced to 2-3 familiarization flights, and, as the results of the war in the air showed, this was enough for highly experienced and courageous pilots.

In addition to forced deliveries of weapons, Germany made available to the Finnish command and its own combat units. As part of the 1st Air Force of the Luftwaffe, an air regiment was formed, which received by the name of its commander

the name "Kyukhlmei connection". The formation included 23 Ju-87 dive bombers and 23 fighters (mainly heavy FW-190s, which were also used for assault strikes on ground forces). On June 16, aircraft of the K hlmei formation flew from Estonia to the Immola airfield (to the northeast of Imatra) and already on June 20 took part in fierce air battles over Vyborg (52, p. 339).

From June 20 to June 23, the 303rd brigade of "assault guns" arrived in Finland by sea, armed with 42 Stug-40/42 self-propelled guns. In comparison with the number of Soviet armored vehicles, this was a "drop in the ocean", but for the Finns, the appearance of the 303rd brigade meant a radical increase in the striking power of the counterattacking units, since by June 21 in the only Finnish armored division there were only 17 Stug-40 self-propelled guns in combat readiness ", 3 "T-34", 1 "KV", 3 "T-28" and 60 "T-26" (366). However, it is worth noting that, judging by the documents of the headquarters of the Leningrad Front and the 21st Army, the appearance of German units, about which Western historians write so much, was not even noticed by the Soviet

command ... Fulfilling Directive No. 74, the troops of the Leningrad Front launched an offensive from Vyborg to Imatra - Lappeenranta. According to the terrain conditions, the route suitable for the movement of armored vehicles passed through the station. Tali and the village of Ihantala (see Map No. 13). Over the previous 12 days, the divisions of the Red Army were in a continuous offensive 70-80 km. From Vyborg to Ihantal is only 15 km in a straight line. But it was not possible to pass these 15 km. At the end of June 1944, the most fierce battle in the history of the three Soviet-Finnish wars broke out near these two villages,

not marked on any geographical map. Having concentrated 10 rifle divisions on the breakthrough site north of Tali, by June 25, Soviet troops had broken through the defenses of the Finnish troops 4-6 km in depth. It was not possible to advance further. Moreover, as Mannerheim writes, *"the Russians were pushed back somewhat by counterattacks, during which our troops, with almost inhuman efforts, almost cut off the retreat routes of this wedge and did not surround it with a wide ring ... For four days the front line fluctuated in waves, attacks and cou*

another uninterrupted series ... The last part transferred from Eastern Karelia - the 6th division under the command of the valiant Major General Vihma, who fell a hero in these battles - managed to take up positions in time and stabilize the defense near Ihantala. The offensive, which involved 16-17 divisions, was repulsed. We did not even dare to hope for such an ending. It was a real miracle ... " On July 5, the headquarters of the 21st Army adopted the next" Operation

Plan to break through the defensive positions of the Finns. The army troops were ordered: *"... to seize the line of the state border in the area ...*

Subsequently, moving on to continuous pursuit in the general direction to the west, destroy the retreating enemy groups and overcome the fortified zone of the border UR on their shoulders, creating conditions for the further offensive of the army troops ..." (371)

According to intelligence, the balance of forces at the front the expected offensive of the 21st Army by July 4 was:

- 2.6 to 1 for infantry battalions; -

5.5 to 1 in terms of the number of machine guns; - 7 to 1 for

artillery (372). After the losses suffered, the infantry units of the Finns were remnants, the number of personnel of which was estimated by the reconnaissance of the 21st Army at 170-260 people per one km of the front (according to the Regulations of the Red Army, the operational density in the defense should have been from 1 to 2.5 thousand people). people per kilometer of the front). And yet, it was not possible to "transition to inseparable pursuit". It was not even possible to advance one step north of Ihantal.

After two weeks of endless attempts to break through the defenses of the Finnish troops on the Tali-Ihantala line were unsuccessful, Marshal Govorov once again proved that he received the marshal's rank not by chance. In February 1940, having placed one division on the approaches to the Finnish pillboxes, the Red commanders immediately drove the next two there. In early July 1944, the commander of the Leningrad Front prepared and began to implement a complex and very promising operation. The idea of the operation was to carry out a deep bilateral coverage of the main grouping of Finnish troops. Another one, the 59th Army, was introduced into the battle,

which in the period from July 4 to 6, in close cooperation with the Baltic Fleet, took possession of the islands of the Vyborg Bay and proceeded to land on the northern coast of the bay, deep in the rear of the Finnish troops. On July 4, the 23rd Army went on the offensive, with the task of forcing the river. Vuoksi in the Vuosalmi area and then, advancing along the eastern bank of the river to

the north, complete the encirclement of the enemy. An attempt to repeat the amphibious landing operation (practically "mirror-replicating" the actions of the 8th Infantry Division at the end of August 1941) was thwarted by the efforts

of Finnish aviation and the "Kuhlmei formation". It would seem that with the amount of fighter aircraft that was used *"to invade the depths of Finland"*, any Finnish bomber that had the courage to take to the skies should have been immediately destroyed. In reality, everything happened exactly the opposite - Finnish and German fighters provided such cover for their strike aircraft that not a single Finnish bomber was shot down in the landing area from July 6 to 8 (52, p. 351). Units of the 59th Army, which nevertheless managed to land on the northern shore of the Vyborg Bay, were stopped and driven back by the German 122nd Infantry Division, which had been transported by sea from the Narva region to Finland shortly before (65, p. 352).

The offensive of the 23rd Army turned out to be equally fruitless. From July 4 to 9, Finnish troops were dropped from the bridgehead near the village of Yarapaya. On July 9, after a powerful artillery barrage and under the cover of dense smoke screens, the troops of the Leningrad Front crossed the Vuoksi River. On July 10 and 11, fierce battles were fought on the ground and in the air. Finnish fighters again ensured the "immunity" of their bombers, which bombed bridgeheads in the area of the breakthrough from morning to evening. By July 12, the offensive of the troops of the 23rd Army finally bogged down, and the Soviet troops went on the defensive on

the eastern bank of the Vuoksi. On July 15, 1944, the Military Council of the Leningrad Front, in special Directive No. 80, subjected the actions of the command

of the 23rd Army to devastating criticism: *"Commander-23 was tasked on 4.7.44 to destroy the enemy on his bridgehead on the western bank of the*

develop an offensive along its eastern shore. Sufficient forces and means were allocated for the operation.

Instead of an organized and swift strike and destruction of the enemy's bridgehead in one day, the troops of the army trampled in front of him for 6 days. Parts of the 98th SC, having a significant superiority over the enemy (in infantry - 6 times, in artillery and aviation - 4 times), only on the 7th day at the cost of huge losses (1046 killed and 4265 wounded) cleared the right bank of the Vuoksi from the enemy. The reason for the unsatisfactory conduct of the battle is: the complete absence of controlled combined-arms combat ... analysis of the situation and timely conclusions from it were replaced by the transmission of deliberately false, unconfirmed reports and data ... control was random and uninitiative ... the commander of the 281st division did not know the actual situation, showed lack of will and, sitting

in a dugout, did not lead the battle ... The fighting to eliminate the bridgehead and forcing showed tactical illiteracy, organizational weakness and inactivity of the commanders of formations and headquarters of the 23rd Army ... Due to the loss of command and control, the lack of an elementary organization of the battle, the criminal delay in crossing tanks and SU, the lack of maximum and the correct use of the crossed artillery, 115 SC suffered unreasonably large losses (142 rifle divisions - 2476 people and 10 rifle divisions - 2386 people), and instead of increasing the strike and increasing the rate of breakthrough, the corps actually went on the defensive on an extremely narrow

It is difficult to say how objective and balanced such assessment of the actions of the 23rd Army was. The troops of the army did not just "stomp in front of the bridgehead", but tried to overcome the defenses of the desperately resisting Finns. Perhaps the appearance of Directive No. 80 was only a reflection of the bewilderment and indignation that seized Stalin and his marshals after another attempt to crush the "Finnish booger" turned out to be fruitless.

Already on June 14–15, Finnish intelligence recorded the fact that the withdrawal of Soviet troops to the south had begun. On July 18, the offensive of the Red Army on the Karelian Isthmus was stopped everywhere. **At no point on the front did the Red Army**

reached the 1940 border line, moreover, did not cross it. Burning down the Imatra station was also unsuccessful

this time... After the offensive on the main strategic direction Vyborg-Helsinki was stopped, the fighting in the Ladoga Karelia completely lost any reasonable meaning. It was enough to calmly, without unnecessary bloodshed, wait for the start of peace negotiations, because there could no longer be any doubt that the return of Karelia would be one of the indispensable conditions for ending the war, either in Moscow or in Helsinki. Nevertheless, 16 rifle divisions and 3 tank brigades of the Karelian Front continued the offensive launched on June 21. Finnish troops (4 infantry divisions and 2 brigades) received and successfully completed the task of an organized retreat from the Svir River and Petrozavodsk to the line of long-term fortifications, passing approximately through Pitkyaranta - Loimola - Kuolismaa. On this line, the offensive of the Soviet troops was stopped in mid-July, although hostilities continued on the extreme northern flank of the Karelian Front until August 9th. *"On July 21, formations of the 32nd Army entered the border with Finland in 1940. The exit of Soviet troops to the border with Finland meant the final failure of the plans of the Finnish leadership,"* the authors of the 12-volume book (374) cheerfully assured the gullible Soviet reader. Indeed, at one single point, in the Kuolismaa-Ilomantsi region, Soviet troops reached the 1940 border line. This ended in a *"final failure"*, that is, a cauldron of encirclement, from which the remnants of two Soviet divisions escaped, leaving all heavy weapons among forests and swamps.

During the senseless and merciless operation, the troops of the Karelian Front lost 17 thousand people killed and missing, 63 thousand people were wounded. The losses of the Leningrad Front are not exactly known (as noted above, the official data completely ignores the losses of the heaviest battles on June 21 - July 18, 1944), but most likely they were many times greater than the losses of the Karelian Front. The losses of the Finnish army (mainly on the Karelian Isthmus) were very high. Only irretrievable losses (killed and missing) are estimated in various sources by figures from 26 to 32 thousand people. In other words, the irretrievable losses of actually one month of fighting in 1944

turned out to be **more than the losses of the victorious offensive** of the

summer - autumn of 1941. A fact that, perhaps more clearly than all others, speaks of significantly increased by 1944 the combat power of the Red Army.

The results of the combat operations of the Finnish fighters turned out to be absolutely stunning. According to Finnish data, between June 9 and July 18, the LLv-24 and LLv-34 pilots (these two groups were armed with Messerschmitts) completed 2,168 sorties and shot down 425 Soviet aircraft. At the same time, the Finns themselves lost only 18 Messerschmitts, of which only 10 were in battles with Soviet fighters. The results of the combat work of fighters from the LLv-26 were much more modest - 15 downed Soviet aircraft. True, it must be taken into account that the group was armed with Brewsters manufactured in 1939, which had long and repeatedly developed their entire resource and, by the standards of any other aviation, except Finnish, suitable only for scrapping. The German fighters of the K hlmei formation made 984 sorties and shot down 126 aircraft (52, p. 355). These phenomenal figures at first glance give the impression of unbridled "hunting stories", however, in the official collection "Secrecy Removed" it is reported that the losses in the "Vyborg-Petrozavodsk operation" amounted to 311 aircraft (9, p. 371). Again, it is not known whether the compilers of the collection took into account the losses of the Air Force of the Leningrad Front after the capture of Vyborg. But even

if we proceed from the "standard" for air battles of the Second World War threefold overestimation of the number of declared victories over real ones, it turns out that for one lost Finnish fighter, there were 8 downed Soviet aircraft. Mannerheim defined the military-political outcome of the fighting on the Karelian Isthmus briefly and very precisely: *"The enemy realized that a huge price should be paid for our defeat"* (22,

p. 468). Said quite self-critically, without comforting self-deception. The defeat of the Finnish army, of course, was quite possible. In fact, it was just a matter of time and cost. Stalin would not stand behind the price, but there was no time. The 3rd Soviet-Finnish War ended on the same lines (Vyborg - the western bank of the Vuoksi River) and, more importantly, for the same reason as

the first, "winter" war. **It was not possible to quickly defeat and destroy the Finnish army, and Stalin did not become involved in a protracted exhausting war, as this could interfere with the implementation of much more significant plans.**

The knowledge of actually accomplished facts equally hinders both writers and readers of military history books. A well-known psychological paradox lies in the fact that everything that happened seems to be the only possible one, and unrealized alternatives seem completely impossible. But this is nothing more than an optical illusion. Everything could have been very different. Today, even a conscientious schoolboy knows that a long 10 months have passed from the landing of the allies in Normandy to the capture of Berlin. But then, in the summer of 1944, no one could know for sure, including Stalin, Mannerheim, Roosevelt and Churchill. And the bomb that exploded at Hitler's Headquarters on July 20, 1944, could explode one meter to the left or right of the place where it actually exploded. And if the assassination attempt was successful, a military coup in Berlin could succeed. In this case, the surrender of the Wehrmacht in the West would have been practically inevitable and the historic meeting of Soviet and American troops could have taken place not in May 1945 on the Elbe, but in August 1944 on the Vistula. Is it necessary to prove that such an outcome of the war did not suit

Comrade Stalin at all? However, even without taking into account the factor of the assassination attempt on Hitler, the German Western Front at the end of the summer of 1944 was close to a catastrophic defeat. The English historian Liddell Hart, in his textbook History of the Second Wo

"... The war could have ended in September 1944. The main forces of the German troops in the West were concentrated in Normandy and remained there until they were defeated or surrounded. The surviving miserable remnants could not offer serious resistance and retreated, but soon they were also destroyed by the rapidly advancing motorized troops of the allies ... As evidenced by captured documents, the Germans had about 100 tanks suitable for combat on the entire Western Front against 2 thousand tanks, which were available to advanced formations allies. The Germans had only 570 aircraft, while

there were more than 14 thousand aircraft on the Western Front..." (368, pp. 592–593)

In mid-July 1944, the battle in northern France was in full swing, and the success of the Allies was not yet so obvious, but in any case, Tali, Ihtala and other tiny villages, lost among the lakes and forests of Karelia, could no longer interest Stalin at that time. The moment when the decisive fate of the war and post-war Europe began the race to Berlin. History has twice outwitted the great deceiver. If Stalin had started the 3rd Soviet-Finnish War in May 1944, immediately after the completion of the spring thaw, then, in all likelihood, the outcome of this war would have been completely different - Finland would have had to become a poor Russian "Non-Black Earth Region". But Stalin pulled and waited for the moment when all the forces and all the attention of the Western allies would be riveted to the strip of the seashore in Normandy, and they would not be able to prevent him from implementing plans for the complete defeat and occupation of Finland. As a result of the time for development and completion of the success achieved at Vyborg, no longer it turned out.

Secondly, the enormous efforts that Stalin made in 1941 to force Churchill to at least formally declare war on Finland led in 1944 to a completely undesirable result. This result is visible already in the very first lines of the Armistice Agreement, which ended the 3rd (and last) Soviet-Finnish War, for the Agreement was concluded by the "Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, acting *from on behalf of all the United Nations at war with Finland...*"

And acting jointly with "His Majesty in the United Kingdom" and even on behalf of "all the United Nations", Comrade Stalin was forced to "step on the throat of his own song", and in many places. If in March 1940 negotiations in Moscow were conducted under the roar of Soviet artillery cannonade, then in September 1944 the elementary requirements of international law had to be observed, as a result of which the fire was ceased two days before the arrival of the Finnish delegation in Moscow (September 7) and after two

weeks before the signing of the Armistice Agreement (September 19). And the terms of the Agreement had to be negotiated during four meetings (September 6, 9, 11 and 14) with British Ambassador Kerr (364). And the body, which *"until the conclusion of peace with Finland will take over the regulation and control over the implementation of these conditions,"* received the official name "Allied Control Commission."

In fact, the Allied Control Commission became Soviet, and it was headed by none other than the Secretary of the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks A.A. Zhdanov, but the legal status of the "Union Commission" and the need to agree in the future on the terms of the final peace treaty with the same "United Nations" prevented Comrade Zhdanov from working like a Bolshevik, with a spark ... Moreover, the heart of the fiery Bolshevik, exhausted by alcohol, was torn at the thought that Finland could have been "squeezed". M. Djilas writes in his memoirs that in April 1945, during an official dinner in honor of I. Tito in the Kremlin, Zhdanov said: *"We made a mistake that the Finns did not capitulate."* Stalin (according to Djilas) supported Zhdanov: *"Yes, it was a mistake. We looked too much at the Americans, but they would not lift a finger"* (369). The

resentment was so great that it survived Comrade Zhdanov and, through generations of other comrades, has reached our days. As a result, in a collection of scientific articles published in St. Petersburg in 2006, one can read the following passage: *"Since Finland did not capitulate, the task of the Allied Control Commission and its chairman became much more complicated - it was necessary to act through the official Finnish authorities"* (35, p. 396). There is no doubt - it was much easier to breathe and work more joyfully in the "countries of people's democracy", where it was possible to act through the "authorities" brought in the convoy of

the Soviet army ... As for the terms of the Armistice Agreement (mainly confirmed in the peace treaty concluded on February 10 1947 in Paris), they generally corresponded to the "six conditions" of March - April 1944. There were three significant changes, and all of them were not in favor

of Finland. Firstly, the Soviet Union achieved the provision of it *"on the rights of lease of territory and water spaces for the creation*

Soviet naval base in the Porkkala-Udd area. Thus, instead of the Hanko naval base at a distance of 100 km from Helsinki, the Porkkala-Udd naval base appeared 20 km from Helsinki. Secondly,

paragraph 13 was introduced into the Agreement, according to which Finland undertook to *"cooperate with the Allied Powers in the detention and trial of persons accused of war crimes."* This point was subsequently used not to search for and punish the organizers of the so-called Karelian partisan detachments that terrorized civilians, but to justify the demands of the Soviet Union to bring the lawful leaders of Finland to trial. Thirdly, reparations were reduced to \$300 million, but the payment had to be made in goods at pre-war (i.e.,

much lower) prices, which actually increased the severity of reparations even more. Moreover, later the Soviet Union demanded the payment of Finland's debt to Germany in the amount of 6.5 billion Finnish marks (an amount equal to the "rent" for Porkkala Udd for 1300 years) (25, p. 235). Formally, legally, this meant that the Soviet Union declared itself the successor of the Nazi "Reich". A claim that has some moral and political grounds, but is hardly based on law and right ...

"Someone else's good does not go for the future." The truth of this wise Russian proverb can be seen today by every tourist passing from modern Russian Vyborg to modern Finnish Lappeenranta. From the car window, it may seem that not Finland paid the Soviet Union, but, on the contrary, the USSR paid Finland countless millions every year ...

Epilogue

The word "history" has several different meanings in Russian. Accordingly, the attitude to the common expression "history does not know the subjunctive mood" should also be different. If history is understood as the totality of events that took place in the past, then these events, of course, cannot be changed. But for "history" as one of the social sciences, which set as their task to understand the meaning and direction of the development of the state and the people, consideration of unrealized alternatives is of great importance, because it often allows a more accurate and deeper understanding of the essence of what happened in reality. True, in order not to slide to the other extreme and not to replace science with speculative myth-making, it is very important to determine the "boundary conditions" for constructing alternatives. In particular, to determine their reasonably acceptable chronological depth.

In other words, at what point do we start "constructing a different story"? Since the summer of 1939, when Stalin decided to help Hitler in unleashing a pan-European war? Or from April 3, 1917, when the well-known "sealed carriage" with a small group of major international adventurers arrived at the Finlyandsky (amusing irony of fate!) Station in Petrograd? Or from March 1, 1881, when terrorists in love with the people killed Alexander the Liberator? Or even from the most legendary "calling of the Varangians"? Concluding the book devoted to the tragic history of the Soviet-Finnish wars, it

makes sense to consider possible alternative decisions and actions of the leadership of the USSR, starting from a very definite time line - from the spring of 1941. The choice of this particular "time mark" is by no means accidental. The spring of 1941 is that (almost the only) moment in the history of the Stalinist empire when the interests of the multinational Soviet people and the interests of the "collective Stalin" (meaning by this expression the Boss himself and his inner circle) coincided in the main and basically. Up to this point, there has been a very obvious discrepancy

interests. The Soviet people wanted peace and tranquility. He, the Soviet people, already had a life that was not too fun and not at all easily.

The bloody war and all the countless disasters that fall on the shoulders of ordinary people before, during and after the war were absolutely unnecessary for the people. The Stalinist elite, on the other hand, sought to unleash a large-scale war in Europe, since they saw in the war the shortest (if not the only) way to expand their sphere of power beyond the borders of the USSR. Moreover, a victorious war (and the expected rich military booty) was also necessary for Stalin to strengthen domestic political stability, which was pretty undermined by the Great Massacre of 1937-1938. With such a striking discrepancy between the interests of the people and the authorities, the discussion of alternatives becomes simply impossible - there is no single criterion for evaluation. From the point of view of the interests of the people, the invasion of Finland, which began on November 30, 1939, and entailed colossal casualties, was a misfortune, a misfortune, a criminal mistake. From the point of view of Stalin's interests, the only mistake was the insufficient number of troops involved in the operation, which ultimately did not allow the defeat of Finland in a timeframe acceptable for foreign policy circumstances. From the point of view of the interests of the Soviet people, it was necessary already in the autumn of 1939 to provide the enemies of Germany - France and Great Britain - with all possible economic assistance; as they say, "take off the last shirt", but strengthen the Western Front with gasoline, food, ammunition, tanks and aircraft (fortunately, tanks and aircraft were accumulated in the USSR in astronomical quantities). And let them, the British and French, fight against our common enemy! Any working man will agree that it is better to shed sweat than blood. Stalin helped Hitler, but this was not at all a "mistake" - it was an integral part of the plan to foment a pan-European war; without the help of Stalin, Hitler might not have dared to start this war. Stalin's mistake turned out to be only an incorrect assessment of the combat capability of the French army - and nothing more. In the spring of 1941, war between Germany and the USSR became inevitable. Without going into the reasons for this (some of them

discussed above in Part 2), we note the main thing: from that moment on, both the people and Stalin had a common interest, a common task. The war that Hitler brought with him could not be lost. In such a war, only victory was needed. Based on this task, we will try to identify possible alternatives in the actions of the USSR leadership in the "Finland direction". And in

the winter, and in the spring, and in the summer of 1941, the Finnish army was the main military force in Finland. Germany could (and did) influence the decisions made by the Finnish leadership, but these decisions were made not in Berlin, but in Helsinki. This situation opened up opportunities for a peaceful, that is, the simplest and "cheapest" of all possible, solutions to the issue of ensuring the security of the northern borders of the USSR.

Namely: – denunciation of the Moscow Treaty; - the return of all (or most) of the annexed territories;

– conclusion (best of all – through mediation and with guarantees Great Britain and the USA) of a new peace treaty with Finland.

This alternative, with a probability close to 100%, could be implemented, since it fully met the interests of all parties. No one had any "platonic love" for Hitler and his regime in Finland - neither the people, nor the parliament, nor the leaders of the state. For democratic Finland, an alliance with fascist Germany was an unnatural, forced step, which had to be taken in the tragic situation in which Finland was driven by Stalin. On the eve of the war with the Soviet Union, Hitler had neither the time nor the resources for a war against Finland. These two countries do not have a common border. The transfer of each division to Scandinavia was a complex and costly naval operation; the further supply of this division to a large extent depended on the goodwill of Finland, on its readiness to provide its transport routes for the transit of military cargo. In this situation, Hitler could not force Finland to abandon the normalization of relations with Moscow. The cost of such a normalization in the spring of 1941 could have been minimal. Until the Red Army suffered

a crushing defeat from the Wehrmacht, Stalin could still lead

negotiations from the position of a strong but generous partner. Perhaps it would have been possible to reach a peace agreement without the full return of all the annexed territories. Strictly speaking, exactly one issue was strategically important: the preservation of the transport corridor around the northern tip of Lake Ladoga, i.e., the railway from Leningrad through Kexholm and Sortavala to Petrozavodsk and further everywhere. The solution of this issue made the blockade of Leningrad impossible in principle. Everything else (Vyborg, Koivisto, Enso, forests and lakes of Ladoga Karelia) was just a matter of prestige and economic benefits. In any case, buying pulp in Finland would be an order of magnitude cheaper than fighting against the Finnish army. The issue of a transport

corridor was quite solvable: an agreement on transit, the provision of a railway for the exclusive use of the USSR for the period of hostilities, the creation of an extraterritorial "special zone", etc. If there was a desire and political will, it would not be difficult to find appropriate legal formulations. If there was a desire, one could also find those 100-150 thousand tons of grain, with the help of which Germany kept Finland in an economic "stranglehold". Of course, during the war there is no extra grain, but on the other hand, where did the "excess grain" come from in Germany? Is it from Soviet supplies? The grain problem existed, but it should not be overdramatized. In the real story, in the summer of 1944, Sweden undertook and successfully fulfilled the obligation to supply grain to Finland within six months of the break in relations between Finland and Germany. The Soviet Union, without a doubt, possessed incomparably larger areas under crops and food reserves than Sweden.

The possible military-strategic consequences of a peaceful resolution of the conflict with Finland are so obvious that they do not need a detailed explanation. Enormous forces could be transferred to the Baltic States (and transferred in advance, by no means waiting for the defeat of the North-Western Front): two mechanized corps, fifteen rifle divisions, numerous aviation and artillery units of the Leningrad Military District. In general, the grouping of Soviet troops in the Baltic could

be almost doubled! Later, in July-August 1941, those reserves that in real history had to be transferred to the 7th and 23rd armies could be sent to the German front (and not to the front of the Finnish war that no one needed). This is about 9 more divisions. It is not a fact that in this situation the

Germans would have been able to reach the suburbs of Leningrad. But with any development of the defensive operation on the southwestern approaches to Leningrad, even with such a catastrophic one that actually took place, the blockade of Leningrad (for the above transport and geographical reasons) would be absolutely impossible. And this would mean not only salvation from starvation of a huge (to this day not known exactly) number of civilians in Leningrad. It is worth remembering how many fruitless attempts to break through the encirclement cost the Red Army, how many soldiers, how many weapons and equipment died in the Sinyavin swamps, on the ill-fated "Neva patch", surrounded by Lyuban. Finally, those 190,000 soldiers and commanders who were killed, captured, or wounded during the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War would remain in service. The rejection of a peaceful, political resolution of the Soviet-Finnish conflict was

undoubtedly a big mistake. But she was just part of a major, strategic mistake, expressed in the fact that on the eve of the Great War, Stalin arrogantly rejected any steps towards rapprochement with his future allies in the anti-Hitler coalition. If we discard any cunning, then we must directly admit that this was not a "mistake", but a completely conscious unwillingness to burden oneself with any obligations and enter into such an unusual and uncomfortable alliance with democratic countries for a totalitarian despotism. Stalin - as subsequent events showed - was willing to pass on to the Anglo-American allies only the payment of "damages" from his own reckless policies. Moscow did not want to share close and, as it seemed in May 1941, true "booty".

Moreover, they did not want to give up the former "booty", from the annexed territory of Finland that had already become familiar and "their own".

In line with all these "mistakes" lies the decision to launch an air strike on Finland on June 25, 1941. The quotation marks at the word "mistake" are quite justified. Even

if we completely discard the version of the provocation of the German special services, we have to state that this decision arose from blatant amazing cowardly incompetence, suspicion and unjustified underestimation of the enemy. It would seem that after the bloody experience of the "winter war" one new war with Finland ^{from} should have already come to the understanding that a ^{mixture} should be avoided by all possible means. Alas, Voroshilov's nonsense that *"we will crush all the Baltics there at any time under all circumstances"* still sounded in the ears of the Kremlin rulers, and they did not even think about the consequences that their aggressive stupidity could lead to. After June 25, after the catastrophic defeat of the armies of the western border districts, after the start of a successful Finnish offensive in Karelia, the "issue price" increased many times over. In this qualitatively new situation it would have been much more difficult to "pacify Finland". A return to the 1939 border would be the minimum condition for starting negotiations (while a few months ago it was the maximum that the Finnish side could only dream of). In any case, Stalin's proposals,

expressed in the famous letter to Roosevelt, speak more of a stubborn unwillingness to face the facts than of a firm determination to correct old mistakes. Here is the text of this letter: *"August 4, 1941. JV STALIN TO F. ROOSEVELT The USSR attaches great importance to the question of the neutralization of Finland and its withdrawal from Germany. The severance of relations between England and Finland and the blockade of Finland declared by England had already taken their toll and gave rise to conflicts in the ruling circles of Finland. Voices are being heard for Finland's neutrality and reconciliation with the USSR... If the US Government had deemed it necessary to threaten Finland with a severance of relations, the Finnish Government would have become more resolute in withdrawing from Germany. In this case, the Soviet Government could make some territorial concessions to Finland in order to*

in order to reconcile the latter and conclude a new peace treaty with it ... ” (173, p. 3) By

August 4, the Finnish army had already completely liberated all the annexed territories in Ladoga Karelia and launched an offensive on the Karelian Isthmus. The experience of the first month of the 2nd Soviet-Finnish War already gave quite concrete grounds for the assumption of how this offensive might end. To speak of "some territorial concessions" was, to put it mildly, absurd. One gets the impression that Stalin hoped to "peace Finland" mainly with the help of threats from America and England, and even continued to indulge himself with eternal propaganda clichés about "conflicts in ruling circles." It is important to note that by that time a precedent had already

been set for the official refusal of the Soviet Union from the "booty" seized by looting at the beginning of World War II. On July 30, 1941, the USSR Ambassador to Great Britain I. Maisky and the Polish Prime Minister V. Sikorsky signed an agreement in London in which the USSR government recognized the Soviet-German treaties of 1939 concerning territorial changes in Poland as invalid. Diplomatic relations were restored with the Polish government-in-exile, which for a year and a half had been a favorite object of mockery for Moscow newspapermen.

The fact that the same radical steps were not taken in the "Finland direction", unfortunately, is quite understandable. To return (on paper!) the so-called western Ukraine and western Belarus to Stalin was not a pity at all - by July 30, 1941 he had already lost them long ago, and only an ineradicable optimist could that day believe that the further fate of these territories would depend from the will of Stalin. In addition, Poland was a generally recognized ally of Great Britain, Polish pilots fought in the skies over London, Polish units fought in North Africa, and without a formal renunciation of eastern Poland occupied in 1939, Stalin could not count on cooperation with England and the USA. Stalin, apparently, did not yet consider the annexed territories of Finland to be irretrievably lost on August 4, 1941, and therefore did not express a clear and obvious readiness to return them to their rightful owner. Neither

a long chain of defeats, nor the siege of Leningrad that became a terrible reality, did not shake Stalin's determination not to return a single inch of Finnish land to the "White Finns". In the end, Stalin became the

winner. He won and Finland lost. The price of this victory is hundreds of thousands of lives of the inhabitants of besieged Leningrad, hundreds of thousands of lives of Soviet soldiers who died on the distant and near approaches to Leningrad, Vyborg, Kexholm, Petrozavodsk ... But who counted these victims among us? "We will not stand up for the price ..."

In the preface to this book, the author honestly warned readers that the "Finnish component" of the issue would be considered only in the most minimal degree, and the main attention would be paid to the actions and motives of the USSR leadership. This book, unlike many others written by Russian historians, is not about how Finland entered the war against the USSR. This is a book about how the Soviet Union entered the war against Finland. The book is finished. Now, having fulfilled his promise to readers, the author considers it possible and appropriate to express his opinion on the last pages of the text about the alternatives and mistakes in the actions of the Finnish leadership.

Finland lost the war. This is a fact. And a fact for a long time known and recognized in Finland itself.

Already on September 25, 1944, speaking on the radio, the future president Finland Urho Kekkonen said:

"..We all, all the people, must steadfastly endure our defeat. We lost the war against the Soviet Union, our courageous struggle ended in a heavy defeat ... We need to admit to ourselves and others that our brave and staunch enemy defeated us ... An honest recognition of this fact will become a prerequisite and a touchstone for our national existence, because the nurturing of the thought of revenge and both explicit and secret plans to return the lost, that is, thoughts of revenge, mean death for our people ... " (35, p. 397)

The consequences of the defeat were extremely severe for Finland. The main raw material wealth of the country - nickel mines in polar Petsamo - went to the USSR (now this city is called

Pechenga). Together with the mines of Petsamo, Finland also lost a strategically important outlet to the Barents Sea. Finland had to pay huge reparations. From the country devastated by many years of war, 340 thousand wagons with timber, pulp, paper, machine tools went to the equally devastated Soviet Union - if you combine these wagons into a single train, it would stretch from the shores of the Gulf of Finland to Africa (15). Finland was forced to demobilize its army, transfer the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs into the hands of the communist Y. Leino (son-in-law of the infamous "Mr. Kuusinen"), come to terms with the existence of a Soviet military base 20 km from the center of Helsinki, send the legitimate leaders of the country to prison just because that they zealously fulfilled their constitutional duties. The sovereignty and independence of Finland hung on the thinnest thread, and no one could at that moment vouch for the fact that this thread would withstand the enormous pressure of its eastern neighbor. And for the achievement of SUCH a result, the Finnish army and the Finnish people paid with their lives

almost 60 thousand soldiers. Could Finland get out of the war in a different way? results? What alternatives were missed, when and why?

At first glance, there was a way out, and it was quite clear and simple. At first glance, only one thing was required of the Finnish leadership - to do nothing. Leave the situation as it was in April-May 1941. As Comrade Trotsky used to say: "No peace, no war, but disband the army." Somewhat more specifically: to remain in positions of neutrality, not to allow the deployment (or even passage) of German troops in northern Finland, not to allow even a short appearance of German warships in Finnish ports, not to open hostilities against the Soviet Union. Wait patiently for the end of the world war. With this scenario, Finland, in the "worst" case, would have come out of the war without casualties and destruction, without the loss of Petsamo, without the burden of ruinous reparations. At best, one could count on the fact that the Western allies (USA and Great Britain), as part of the general post-war reorganization of Europe, would force Stalin to return part of the territories annexed in March 1940 to Finland. The picture is very beautiful. Was it feasible?

History is always multivariate. Such is the firm subjective opinion of the author of this book. And in this case, there was a non-zero probability of the implementation of the alternative described above. To do this, Ryti and Mannerheim were supposed to

"only": - receive the most reliable information through reconnaissance that the Red Army was preparing to conduct the largest offensive operation in the southwest (in southern Poland, Slovakia and Romania), and on the Finnish border for the summer 1941 only "active defense" is planned;

- to make an accurate forecast of the development of hostilities of a future German-Soviet war; not just assume, but come to the firm conviction that this war will be protracted, many years and exhausting, that the Germans will reach Leningrad and Moscow, but will not be able to take

them; - on the basis of such information and such a forecast, refuse (at negotiations in late May - early June 1941) military cooperation with Germany;

- do not react to large-scale provocations like the bombing of June 25-26 in the hope that in a few days the most severe defeats in the west will force Stalin to leave Finland alone. That, in fact, is all that was required. This

was not done, and Finland came to those tragic results with which she ended the war. Consequently, Ryti, Mannerheim and other senior leaders made a mistake. But there is hardly a single unbiased person who would apply the term "stupidity" to this tragic mistake. Was it easy to make a mistake? To this day, more than 60 years after the war, Russian historians continue to argue and cannot come to a consensus about what Stalin was going to do in the summer of 1941. Many continue to vehemently deny the fact that the Red Army was preparing to conduct a grandiose offensive operation in southern Poland - and after all, it was exclusively and only the preparation for this operation that took the Damocles sword of the Soviet invasion away from Finland, which hung over it since the summer of 1940. It was even more difficult not to make a mistake in assessing the real combat effectiveness of

the Red Army, in its ability to withstand a blow

Wehrmacht. It was exceptionally difficult for Marshal Mannerheim not to be mistaken in this matter. He knew too much. He served in the Russian army for 30 years, having gone a long way in it from captain to lieutenant general. Mannerheim had experience of personal participation in the last two wars of the Russian Empire (Japanese and World War I), and the catastrophic collapse of the Russian army in 1917 took place before his eyes. Finally, it was he who bore the heaviest burden of commanding the Finnish army from the first to the last day of the "winter war". Was it possible after that not to come to the most pessimistic assessments of the combat effectiveness of the Red Army? Could Mannerheim doubt that the army, which, having a huge numerical and overwhelming technical superiority, trampled for three months on the Karelian Isthmus, filling it with tens of thousands of corpses of Red Army soldiers, would be immediately smashed to smithereens at the first clash with the best army in the world, which in the summer of 41 could rightfully be

considered the German Wehrmacht? Mannerheim was wrong, but in this respect he was far from alone. On July 3, 1941, the Chief of the General Staff of the Wehrmacht, F. Halder, wrote in his diary: *"It would not be an exaggeration to say that the campaign against Russia was won within 14 days."* Neither Mannerheim, nor Halder, nor dozens of other politicians and generals (including those in the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition) could understand and believe that the Soviet-German war, the war between Stalin and Hitler, would turn into the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people. This was their fundamental mistake. But let's not be too strict - what can be demanded from contemporaries of rapidly passing events, if to this day the majority of Soviet (now Russian) historians do not want to understand and recognize this really difficult dialectic of the transition from a fight unleashed by two dictators for the division of booty to the Great Liberation a war in which a great nation

has risen. Returning to the spring of 1941, we cannot help but admit that from the assumption of the inevitable and imminent defeat of the Red Army, a completely different strategy for Finland's actions loomed. Who was to leave the territory of Karelia? Germans? The Barbarossa plan, as you know, set the ultimate goal of the operation as *"creating a barrier along the general line Volga -*

Arkhangelsk". At the same time, all the territories of the north of Russia, inhabited by Karelians, Finns, and Veps, were supposed to enter the zone of German occupation. Moreover, after the successful implementation of the "Barbarossa plan", Finland's eastern neighbor would no longer be the Soviet Union, but Hitler's Third Reich, which, moreover, was strengthened many times due to the raw materials and production resources of the former USSR.

In real history, Mannerheim refused the repeated proposals of the German command to attack the connection with the Wehrmacht from the Svir River to Tikhvin and Volkhov and directed the main efforts of the Finnish army to create a defensive line along the line of Segozero - Lake Onega - r. Svir - Lake Ladoga. From whom, from what army was Mannerheim going to defend himself at this line? Isn't it from German? With a strong desire, you can, of course,

find something in common between the actions of the Finnish leadership in the summer of 1941 and the Red Army's invasion of Poland in September 1939. Yes, there are similarities: in both cases, the main propaganda argument was "protection half-brothers, abandoned to the mercy of fate by the former unlucky rulers. However, at this rather formal than substantive moment, all coincidences end, and a huge, fundamental difference opens up in the goals and results of the actions of Stalin and Mannerheim.

In September 1939, Stalin could have saved Poland, but he chose to destroy it. Mannerheim and his valiant army, due to the huge difference in size, could not radically change the course of hostilities in the summer of 1941 and save the Red Army from defeat. In September 1939, Stalin occupied half (52%) of the territory of Poland, on which more than a third of the total population lived before the war. In the autumn of 1941, the Finnish army occupied an area that was home to less than one-third of a percent of the population of the USSR and lacked any significant military-industrial enterprises. In September 1939, the mutual goal of Stalin and Hitler was the elimination of Polish statehood (which was directly and clearly stated in joint documents that were published on the front page of the Pravda newspaper), and the crushing blow of the Red Army greatly contributed to the achievement of this criminal goal. . Finland liberated the territories annexed from it

and tried to save her fellow tribesmen from Stalinist terror, and it was not her fault that this could only be achieved by military means ... After Stalingrad and Kursk, Stalin would no longer make any concessions to the Finns. From that moment (from the summer of 1943) Finland only had to wait for the inevitable retribution for her complicity in Hitler's war. In hindsight, it can be assumed that somewhere in the year 42 there was a moment when the Finnish leadership could withdraw from the war, decisively breaking with Germany and agreeing to significant territorial concessions to Stalin. Perhaps in 1942 such an agreement with Moscow was still possible. In any case, the conclusion of peace with Finland, which automatically meant a "peaceful breakthrough" of the blockade of Leningrad, met both the immediate and long-term interests of the Soviet and Finnish peoples. The failure to reach such an agreement weighs heavily on the conscience of the political leaders of the two countries. Whether attempts were made to reach such an agreement - about this the author of this book says nothing.

known.

Summing up all of the above, we have to agree that the leaders of Finland could not find such a way out of the endlessly complex and unpredictable situation of 1940-1941 that would protect the interests and honor of their country. And yet, on the scales of history, the tragic mistakes made in the struggle to save the Finnish people and their statehood should have a different weight than the aggressive stupidity of Stalin and his henchmen.

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